

BECOMING JEREMIAH:  
THE INFLUENCE OF JOHN KNOX'S TIME IN ENGLAND ON HIS FORMATION

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## ABSTRACT

This work focuses on John Knox's time spent in England (1549-1553) and its influence on him and on his approach to reform. The effect of this time is shown in his 1554 letters which he wrote to those who remained in England. Of primary interest is *A Godly Warning* and *A Faithful Admonition*.

This study examines Knox's attitude towards the Lord's Supper and the debates he entered into regarding its practice while in England. The culmination of this being his objection to the 1552 *Book of Common Prayer*, which commanded the participants to kneel to receive the sacrament, this resulted in the insertion of the "Black Rubric". Knox's attitude to the English Reformation and development into his role as a preacher, pastor and prophet is further revealed in his 1554 letters which he wrote after leaving England during Mary's reign. In particular, his longer treatises *A Godly Warning*— in which he invokes the biblical prophet Jerimiah— and *A Faithful Admonition*— where he begins to make radical political arguments— demonstrate the evolution Knox underwent during his time in England. Knox's development is finally demonstrated by his actions as pastor to the English Exile community in Frankfurt (1554-1555).

This study examines Knox's development early in his career particularly through his understanding of the Lord's Supper and to evangelical reform. This also helps to better understand the influence his time in England had on the development of his political thought which is tied to his vision of reform.

## VITA

The author of this work is James Reuben Fraser. Born November 22, 1988 in Vancouver, Canada. He has lived the majority of his life in Western Canada and received a Bachelor of Arts in Ministry from Prairie College in Three Hills, Alberta in 2010. In 2015 he moved to South Hamilton along with his wife Pamela and their daughter Ella to begin a Master of Arts in Church History at Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary.

Fraser intends on completing his degree from GCTS during the summer of 2017 and officially graduating in October. He and his family will return to Canada before pursuing further opportunities.

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Finally, I am deeply thankful to my family. My daughter, Ella and most of all to my wife Pamela who has been a constant source of encouragement and support and without whom none neither this work or any of my studies would have been possible. It is to them that this work is dedicated with much love.

*Thanks be to God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Who have led me this far and will “keep [my] going out and [my] coming in from this time forth and forevermore.”*

## Introduction

In John Knox's *History of the Reformation in Scotland*, his at times semi-autobiographical account of the Scottish Reformation Knox gives little detail regarding the five years he spent in England at the beginning of his ministry. He writes only, "The said John was first appointed preacher to Berwick, then to Newcastle; last he was called to London, and to the south parts of England, where he remained to the death of King Edward the Sixth."<sup>1</sup> To add any more detail likely would have detracted from his narrative concerning the Scottish Reformation, but contrary to the space given there this period would have a great impact on Knox and his formation as a reformer and his theory of reform.

Knox spent just over five years in England soon after publicly joining the Protestant or evangelical cause:<sup>2</sup> he had preached his first sermon in St. Andrews only

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<sup>1</sup> John Knox, *John Knox's History of the Reformation in Scotland* vol. I, ed. William Croft Dickinson (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950), 110. Hereafter abbreviated Knox, *History* etc.

<sup>2</sup> While the term Protestant would have been used during the period examined here, it is not always an accurate label for the individuals or the reform movement as a whole during this time in England. Additionally, the term Catholic does not accurately describe the clergy in England who opposed reform during this time. England had long since broken with Rome, and many who opposed further reform did not necessarily desire a return to the Roman Catholic Church even if they preferred doctrines which were similar to Rome's. While the terms Protestant and Catholic are still useful and will be used at times specifically for this historical period in England, the term evangelical best describes those who wished to push for reform along Protestant lines; however, this term should not be equated with our modern-day usage of that label. For those who resisted this change and would normally be associated with a Roman Catholic way of thinking, the term conservative best describes them. At times the term Protestant will still be used to signify a connection to the wider Reformation movement. The term Catholic will also be used at times to show a connection to the Church in Rome although at this time the label Catholic would not have had that connotation but it best represents certain attitudes and beliefs to us today.

two years prior to his arrival in England. It was during this time that he was first given the opportunity to serve as a pastor to a congregation. Knox was also given his first opportunity to be a part of reforming the Church on a national level. Ultimately this reform would be cut short by the untimely death of the young King Edward VI and the succession by his half-sister Mary who would bring England temporarily back into the Catholic fold. Knox makes it clear in other writings the mark England left on him. Soon after leaving England he wrote, "Somtyme I have thought that impossible it had bene, so to have removed my affection from the Realme of Scotland, that eny Realme or Nation coulde have bene equall deare unto me. But God I take to recorde in my conscience, that the troubles present (and appearing to be) in the Realme of England, are double more dolorous unto my hert, then ever were the troubles of Scotland."<sup>3</sup> Jane Dawson in her recent biography of Knox notes the significance of this time in his life, writing, "He was greatly changed by the five years he spent in the Tudor state, being able for the first time to live the Protestant dream in a country that had officially adopted Reformation doctrines."<sup>4</sup> She further remarks on the impact this time had on Knox's self-understanding as he was able to work as a free preacher and pastor for the first time and with a fair degree of success. In the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Peter Lorimer

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<sup>3</sup> John Knox, *The Works of John Knox*, vol. 3 ed. David Laing (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004), 133. Here after abbreviated *Works* 3:133. The majority of Knox's writings have been collected in a six-volumes by David Laing, which retain the original sixteenth century English infused with Scots. Initially, this writing looks odd however while many words are spelt differently most of them are easily discernable by reading them aloud. I have attempted to add a note to any words which are not clearly connected to a modern English word. These texts do give the added benefit of giving a richer feel to Knox's writings as he himself would have written and spoken them. There is also a lack of any scholarly modernization of these texts. This is not the case for his *History of the Reformation in Scotland* which make up the first two volumes of the *Works* collected by Laing. These have been updated in the mid-twentieth century by William Dickinson (already cited) and I have used this modernized edition for Knox's *History* to provide a simpler reading.

<sup>4</sup>Jane Dawson, *John Knox* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015), 53.

presented an important study on Knox's time in England, which was largely based on several previously unpublished Knoxian texts.<sup>5</sup> Lorimer believed that these texts revealed a significant impact that Knox had played on the reform of the English Church during the reign of Edward VI and possibly even beyond and influenced future Puritans. However, while this study is valuable for presenting these texts and showing the strong connection Knox had with England, it is likely that Lorimer overestimated the impact Knox had. Knox's influence on reform during Edward's reign or on later Puritans in the reign of Elizabeth is debatable and unclear. The influence that Knox's time in England had on him is much clearer.

This latter influence can be seen most clearly in the letters he wrote back to evangelicals in England shortly after he fled that country following Mary's ascension. In 1554 he wrote a number of private letters and epistles, meant for wider circulation. Two of these longer letters, *A Godly Letter of Warning, or Admonition to the Faithful in London, Newcastle, and Berwick*<sup>6</sup> and *A Faithful Admonition to the Professors of God's Truth in England*<sup>7</sup>, specifically demonstrate the effect of Knox's development during his time in England and his reaction to the reversal of reform and persecution of evangelicals under Mary. With the use of hindsight Knox came to see the Edwardian reform as a failure—one that he played a role in and a mistake he becomes determined not to make again. These letters as well as the effect Knox's time in England had on him are also often overlooked in the debate over the formation of Knox's extreme political views.

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<sup>5</sup> Peter Lorimer, *John Knox and the Church of England, His Work in Her Pulpit and His Influence Upon Her Liturgy, Articles, and Parties* (London: Henry S. King & Co.)

<sup>6</sup> Hereafter abbreviated *A Godly Letter*.

<sup>7</sup> Hereafter abbreviated *A Faithful Admonition*.

However, by placing these views in the context of Knox's perceived failure in England and his hardening views on reform Knox's time in England and his 1554 letters become crucial to properly understanding his extreme views.

We will begin this study in chapter one with a brief overview of the background of the reign of Edward VI that Knox enters. The focus here will be the attempts at reform, led primarily by Thomas Cranmer, to move the English Church in a more evangelical direction. Special attention will be given to the two books of *Common Prayer* published during this time and the instruction given in them pertaining to the Lord's Supper. From there we will turn our attention to Knox in the second chapter. Here we will see his development, first examining his thought at the time he came to England and then regarding his actions during his time as a preacher in the realm of England. Again, special attention will be given to his view of the Lord's Supper and the debates he engaged in with regard to it. In our third chapter, we will see how this time in England helped to mold Knox into a pastor, preacher, and prophet fully aware of and confident in his calling.<sup>8</sup> This will be done by examining the letters he wrote shortly after leaving England and especially his prophetic letter *A Godly Warning*. This letter also gives insight into Knox's position regarding the Catholic Mass and his theory of reform at a point when that theory was still being formulated. This leads to an examination, in the fourth chapter, of *A Faithful Admonition* which demonstrates his now fully formed view of reform and the role his understanding of the Lord's Supper plays in it. Finally, this will lead us to conclude in our final chapter the role that these discoveries play in our

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<sup>8</sup> The identification of Knox by these three titles can be attributed to Richard G. Kyle. Most clearly displayed in: Richard Kyle, *The Ministry of John Knox: Pastor, Preacher, and Prophet* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2002).

understanding of Knox. We will also briefly move beyond the time of these letters to look at evidence of his resolve in the so-called Troubles in the church in Frankfurt. This will show that while his writings do become more radical in the coming years, they are the logical progression of his focus on total reform and should be seen in light of his time in England and his belief in the failure of reform there.

## CHAPTER I: England Under Good King Josiah

John Knox entered England during a unique time in its religious history. England had officially broken from the Roman Church under Henry VIII in 1534. Since then reforming the church in England had been a slow and uncertain process. Despite his break with Rome, Henry had not embraced the reformation principles the way some of his officials had, most notably Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Cranmer, and in his later years he passed a number of laws, particularly *The Act of the Six Articles*, which frustrated the more progressive elements in the church and government. Therefore, the reign of Henry's young son Edward VI presented an opportunity for greater reform of the Church in England. However, the imposing figure of Henry VIII loomed large even after his death so that Cranmer and others who lead the progressive or evangelical reform of the Church understood the need to tread carefully, resulting in a rather cautious and top-down approach to reform during Edward's reign. While Cranmer and others may have wished to push reform further and faster they were always mindful of the voices which opposed them, both those in high places and those among the people. They were in an especially precarious position since they were leading this reform in the name of a king still not yet at the age of majority. This program of reform was ultimately cut short by Edward's death in 1553 at the age of 15. While worship in the English Church at this point resembled little of what it had at the end of Henry's reign, the journey to that point had been a turbulent and at times tentative one with more dramatic reform only coming shortly before the young king's death. As a result the religious culture was uncertain at

the time of Edward's death and the reforms enacted in his name did not have the time needed to gain wide spread acceptance in England.<sup>1</sup>

### **Protector Somerset and the First *Book of Common Prayer* 1547-1549**

At the time of his death, Henry VIII's religious views remained uncertain. He had rejected the notion of purgatory but refused to go so far as accepting the Reformation doctrine of justification by faith alone as he believed that it discouraged good works. This was a confusing middle ground in which there was no clear understanding of salvation. More important was *The Act of the Six Articles* published in 1539. This decree was still law after Henry's death and clearly articulated a belief in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, and that it was not necessary to receive the Eucharist in both kinds. *The Act* also addressed the need for clerical celibacy.<sup>2</sup> These articles were clear impediments to the evangelical direction Cranmer and others wished to move the church. While the *Articles* remained law, it would have been illegal to discuss other views on these matters, especially to deny the real presence, something that Cranmer now had become convinced of. Conservative voices such as Bishop Stephen Gardiner argued that the order established by Henry should remain until Edward reached the age of majority. While he made this argument on the basis of respect for the recently deceased king his

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix I for a brief overview of Edward's involvement in these reforms and his own beliefs.

<sup>2</sup> "The Act of the Six Articles" in *Documents of the English Reformation* ed. Gerald Bray (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 224.

hope was that he would be able to stall, or at least cast doubt on, the evangelical direction Edward's council would surely take.<sup>3</sup>

Outside of ecclesial matters, English officials were also mindful of international matters, including the ongoing wars with France and Scotland as well as diplomatic relations with Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor. Charles, a cousin to Henry's first born daughter Mary, was a devout Catholic and supported Mary's claim to the throne. In the same year that Edward ascended to the throne, Charles had defeated the Protestant Schmalkaldic forces at the battle of Muhlburg. Having been set free of this more pressing matter there was the constant concern that Charles would be provoked to take a more active role in English matters.

The conservative party within the government had, however, been dealt a series of blows shortly before Henry's death. First Stephen Gardiner had refused to agree to an exchange of some of his episcopal estates, which led to Henry removing Gardiner from the list of counselors who would govern should he die while Edward was still a minor. Soon thereafter, the Earl of Surrey was arrested and executed on grounds of treason.<sup>4</sup> This sidelined his father, the Duke of Norfolk, who was a powerful conservative voice within the nobility. These two events gave the evangelicals in Henry's court the advantage and they appointed Edward Seymour, later Duke of Somerset, to the position of Protector. As Edward VI's uncle, Somerset laid claim to being the nobleman with the

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<sup>3</sup> Stephen Gardiner, "127. To the Privy Council," in *The Letters of Stephen Gardiner* ed. James Arthur Muller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 368-375.

<sup>4</sup> Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer: A Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 359.

closest connection to the young king; he also possessed an impressive military record and appeared to have a sincere Protestant faith.<sup>5</sup> It was to him that the responsibility fell to guide England in the first years of Edward's fragile reign and it was he who in conjunction with Cranmer, began a program of reform. Cranmer remained mindful of the need to move slowly when enacting reform. His thoughts are demonstrated in a conversation with his secretary who suggested that now that Henry VIII had died Cranmer would be able to push forward reform that had been halted during Henry's reign. To this Cranmer replies, "Not so.... For, if the king's father had set forth any thing for the reformation of abuses, who was he that durst gainsay it? Marry! we are now in doubt how men will take the change, or alteration of abuses, in the church."<sup>6</sup> As a result, while religious reform was pushed through during Somerset's time, it was done cautiously. Even so it was met with forceful opposition.

The program of reform which Cranmer would advocate for during Edward's reign can be found in his remarks before Edward at his coronation. Cranmer compared the young king to King Josiah in the Old Testament who had rediscovered the law and began a program of cleansing Judah of idols. Cranmer exhorted Edward to do the same with Catholic iconography and ceremony being the contemporary idols.<sup>7</sup> Cranmer's early focus was on elements of Catholic worship which evangelicals considered idolatrous, namely images and the Mass. This would move religious ceremony in England in a

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<sup>5</sup> A.G. Dickens, *The English Reformation* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989), 228.

<sup>6</sup> John Foxe, *The Acts and Monuments of John Foxe* vol. V, ed. George Townsend and Stephen Cattley (London: R.B Seeley and W. Burnside, 1838), 563.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Cranmer, "A Speech at the Coronation of Edward VI. Feb. 20. 1547." In *The Work of Thomas Cranmer* ed. G.E. Duffield (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), 20-22.

distinctly evangelical direction, but, as Eamon Duffy points out this would also represent a radical change in personal religious devotion. In his study of religious change in England, *The Stripping of the Altars*, Duffy writes that despite the upheaval of Henry's reign the core of what would constitute personal religious devotion remained unaltered, "The people still for the most part prayed upon beads, and the hallowing of bread, water and candles, as well as the Holy Week ceremonies of the blessing of the Palms and of the paschal fire, were all... still retained in the liturgy."<sup>8</sup> This program of reform was begun in Edward's first year; legislation was able to be pushed through the Commons which abolished *The Act of the Six Articles* and the heresy laws attached to them, freeing reformers to speak openly, a necessary first step to allow for the evangelical reform Cranmer and others desired. The government was also able to publish *The Edwardian Injunctions* and *The Sacrament Act*.

The injunctions were perhaps more significant for how they were carried out rather than for what they actually said. The injunctions themselves were not radical, but clearly evangelical and anti-Catholic. They denied the authority of the Pope, prescribed the use of sermons or homilies in church services, which Cranmer had also composed, and commanded the use of English as opposed to Latin in church services. The publication of these injunctions was accompanied visitations by a commission of officials who inspected and enforced adherence to the principles espoused in them. Significantly the officials selected for these tasks were men committed to evangelical reform and were

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<sup>8</sup> Eamon Duffy, *Stripping the Altars: Traditional Religion in England c. 1400- c. 1580* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 449.

given freedom to interpret the injunctions. A particular focus was the use of images of any kind, as Cranmer had mentioned in his sermon to Edward,

Also that they shall take away, utterly extinct and destroy all shrines, covering of shrines, all tables and candlesticks, trundles or rolls of ware, pictures, paintings and all other monuments of feigned miracles, pilgrimages, idolatry and superstition, so that there remain no memory of the same in walls, glasses, windows or elsewhere within their churches or houses. And they shall exhort all their parishioners to do the like within their several houses. And that the churchwardens, at the common charge of the parishioners in every church, shall provide a comely and honest pulpit, to be set in a convenient place within the same, for the preaching of God's Word.<sup>9</sup>

In the visitations in many places, this resulted in iconoclasm. The officials' special concern was to remove any images that had been used improperly, that is used as the focus of worship. How this was decided was left up to the officials during the visitations and therefore images, including stained glass windows, were often removed or destroyed on a large scale.

Many of these elements that more directly affected individual lay people were now being purposefully changed by the injunctions. Duffy points out another significant change was that the injunctions outlawed Sunday processions which would have significantly altered the laity's involvement and understanding of religion.<sup>10</sup> Unsurprisingly these changes were met with some opposition especially from the conservative bishops. The program continued, although the conservative bishops believed they had won a symbolic point when workmen, who had to work under the

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<sup>9</sup> "The Edwardian Injunctions" in *Documents of the English Reformation* ed. Gerald Bray (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 255.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 452.

cover of darkness to remove the rood from St. Paul's in London, were killed when it fell on them. The conservatives claimed this was a sign of God's judgement.<sup>11</sup>

*The Sacrament Act* began to address Cranmer's other concern: the theology and practice of the Eucharist. This sacrament had become a key issue in the Reformation and would be a sticking point throughout Edward's reign. For evangelicals, the Catholic Mass represented a form of idolatry. However, the Mass also represented a key part of medieval spirituality and any drastic change of how this ceremony was performed was likely to be met with strong opposition both from conservative bishops and from the laity. *The Sacrament Act* instructed that the laity should receive the sacrament in both kinds (that is both the bread and the wine). This was a small but significant step in reforming this ceremony. It can be seen as a partial or stop-gap measure leading up to Cranmer's greater project, *The Book of Common Prayer*.

The first *Book of Common Prayer* was approved and published in 1549. It represents Cranmer's goal of reforming the liturgical practice of the English church, but it also shows his desire to enact reform slowly. This is perhaps best demonstrated in the section outlining how communion should be served. The title itself is telling, "The Supper of the Lord and The Holy Communion, commonly called the Mass". In the outline for the service, many of the same elements which had been there before remain; however there are notes and changes in practice which would be significant. A note is also inserted in the text to clearly explain that, while the text speaks of eating Christ's body and drinking his blood, this is meant spiritually, "for then we spiritually eat the

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 254.

flesh of Christ, and drink his blood, then we dwell in Christ and Christ in us, we be made one with Christ, and Christ with us.”<sup>12</sup> An important note is also added, that when the priest takes the bread in his hands and speaks the words of institution he should not elevate it or show it to the people.<sup>13</sup> The compromise that Cranmer is trying to achieve in this first *Prayer Book* is shown clearly in a note concerning the type of bread to be used.

It reads,

For avoiding of all matters and occasion of dissension, it is meet that the bread prepared for the Communion be made, through all this realm, after on sort and fashion: that is to say, unleavened, and round, as it was afore, but without all manner of print, and something more larger and thicker than it was, so that it may be aptly divided in divers pieces: and every one shall be divided in two pieces, at the least, or more, by the discretion of the minister, and so distributed. And men must not think less to be received in part than in the whole, but in each of them the whole body of our Saviour Jesu Christ.<sup>14</sup>

There is a clear desire for the bread in question to be distinct from what was used before, however, not so distinct that it should be dissimilar or foreign to the congregants.<sup>15</sup> This section is also noticeable for what it does not change, the word “altar” is still used and there is also instruction that the laity should not receive the bread into their own hands

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<sup>12</sup> “The Book of Common Prayer 1549” in *The Two Liturgies, A.D. 1549 and A.D. 1552: with other Documents set forth by Authority in the Reign of King Edward VI.* ed. Joseph Ketley (Cambridge: The University Press, 1844) 79.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 88-89.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 97.

<sup>15</sup> It is also notable that the clarification added that it is acceptable for the bread to be broken as each piece contains the full body of Christ is in keeping with Thomas Aquinas’s explanation of the Eucharist. Thomas wrote about this subject in *Summa Contra Gentiles*, “For all that, when dimensions of this kind are broken, the substance of the body of Christ is not broken, because the whole body of Christ remains under every portion.” [Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles* Bk. 4, Ch. 67.1, trans. and ed. Charles J. O’Neil (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), 267.] This clarification seems to be added to placate conservative concerns regarding this practice; however by doing so the book argues a line which seems to imply a corporeal presence in the bread.

but be served by the priest. The book notes that receiving the bread into a person's hands is acceptable but for the time being it is not permitted.<sup>16</sup>

The reaction to the publication and use of *The Book of Common Prayer* was somewhat mixed but, especially at first, mostly negative. Notably, Stephan Gardiner, now jailed in the Tower for his opposition to the visitations, was the most pleased with it. He noted that he could find within the book the form of the Catholic Mass. This shows the compromise that Cranmer was making but he would not have wished for this possibility and it is likely that Gardiner made these comments in an attempt to show what he perceived to be a failure on Cranmer's part.<sup>17</sup> Elsewhere, the implementation of the new liturgy was met with resistance that at times turned violent. The situation in many of the more conservative counties was growing increasingly hostile to reform. There had already been a number of uprisings in response to the closure of chantries the year before.<sup>18</sup> Opposition that led to riots occurred in many of these areas, mostly focused in the north (a traditionally conservative region), following the release of *The Book of Common Prayer* and in the West Country, more serious rebellion emerged. Again these rebellions were not unrelated to economic issues.<sup>19</sup> On the opposite side was the

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<sup>16</sup> "The Book of Common Prayer 1549," in *The Two Liturgies A.D. 1549, and A.D. 1552* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1844), 85, 98-99.

<sup>17</sup> Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Boy King: Edward VI and the Protestant Reformation* (New York: Palgrave, 1999), 89.

<sup>18</sup> This was brought about by the 1548 *Chantry Act* instituted by Somerset. While this would have had an impact on many people's religious lives it was also a source of economic tension. By closing the chantries Somerset secured the money he needed to continue his war in Scotland but thus a significant source of income was removed from many areas which added to their resentment of the order.

<sup>19</sup> Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations: Religion, Politics, and Society under the Tudors* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 174.

“camping time” in the south east and East Anglia. This movement was led by evangelicals who felt that *The Book of Common Prayer* had not gone far enough in its reforms.

While the 1549 *Book of Common Prayer* was not a complete failure, as it did succeed in introducing and formalizing some reforms in the liturgy that would lay the groundwork for ones to come, it resulted in widespread dissatisfaction which demonstrates the uneasy religious climate of this time. As one contemporary noted, “The country was in turmoil with too much change, and old values had not been replaced: ‘The use of the old religion is forbidden by a law, and the use of the new is not yet printed in the stomachs of eleven of twelve parts of the realm.’”<sup>20</sup> Although these rebellions were put down, the unrest was largely blamed on Somerset by the other officials in government, who saw his handling of the situation as troublesome.<sup>21</sup> These events would contribute to his fall later that year.

### **Protector Northumberland and the Second *Book of Common Prayer* 1550-1553**

Knox arrived in England shortly before Somerset’s downfall and enjoyed most of his success due to the favor of John Dudley, later known as Duke of Northumberland who replaced Somerset as Protector in 1550. While Northumberland’s own religious

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 175.

<sup>21</sup> A number of scholars note that Somerset’s approach to these rebels was generous and he sympathized much with the poor but as a result he isolated the other members of power who ended up distrusting him. See Dickens, 228-9 and Haigh, 175.

convictions are not totally clear, evangelical reform did begin to advance more rapidly during his time in power.<sup>22</sup> This progress can be attributed to a number of factors, including the work that had already been done in the previous three years. Additionally, Northumberland ended military conflicts with both Scotland and France—the latter at the expense of hard-won territory—which brought some stability to England. This period also saw an influx of Protestant refugees. These people, many of whom were fleeing the continent after Charles V's victory over the Smalkaldic league, were warmly welcomed by Cranmer. Among these refugees were a number of prominent theologians who helped add weight and influence to the evangelical cause in England.

An important development of this time was the formulation of official teaching on the Eucharist or Lord's Supper. MacCulloch notes that for the majority of the Edwardian Reformation there was no official doctrinal statement on the Lord's Supper; official statements to that effect only began in 1550, and were not complete until 1553 in the Forty-Two Articles.<sup>23</sup> The delay in issuing any such statements can be ascribed to Cranmer's hesitancy to enact reform too quickly as demonstrated above. However, it is also true that the matter of reforming the Eucharist was an especially tricky one. While all reformers rejected the Catholic doctrine of the Mass and transubstantiation, there was no common Protestant doctrine. Even among the members of the Reformed camp there was no agreement until May of 1549 when a number of leaders including Calvin and

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<sup>22</sup> He recanted to Catholics under Mary but was still executed. MacCulloch refers to him as an enigma.

<sup>23</sup> MacCulloch, *The Boy King*, 87. As noted above there had been changes in the practice of how the Eucharist was administered but MacCulloch argues that there had not been "anything resembling an officially defined doctrinal statement on the eucharist" until this point.

Bullinger signed the *Consensus Tigurinus*. Before this it is likely that Cranmer did not wish to make any statements which would run the risk of alienating any of the continental reformers with whom he wished to work.<sup>24</sup> Personally, Cranmer had already come to this position much earlier but had restrained official statements on the matter.<sup>25</sup>

Cranmer began this process of formulating doctrine, in his 1550 treatise *Defense of the true and Catholic doctrine of the sacrament of the body and blood of our saviour Christ*. In this lengthy treatise, Cranmer touches on many issues relating to the nature of the Lord's Supper. His main thrust is to oppose the abuses of the "papists'" Mass that he claims cannot be defended from scripture. In his introduction, he also makes clear that he is writing from a position of authority as Archbishop of Canterbury so while this treatise is meant to only represent his thought it can be understood to have an authoritative weight behind it. He bases his argument on scripture, which he says is the clearest way to avoid abuses, but also on the practices and writings of the early Church Fathers. After outlining and refuting the papal position of transubstantiation, he outlines his own views placed in contrast to that of the "papists." Cranmer's main argument is that while the "papists" teach that the corporal body of Christ is consumed in the Mass, he believes that Christ has ascended to the right hand of the Father in his corporal body and is present in believers spiritually. This, Cranmer writes, is of importance since the papists believe that after Christ (the bread) is chewed and has entered the stomach "he flyeth up, say they, from the receiver unto heaven," however he believes that "Christ remaineth in the man

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer*, 412-14, 462-9, 505-8. MacCulloch notes that his position is a departure from that of both Luther and Henry VIII.

that worthily receiveth it, so long as the man remaineth a member of Christ.”<sup>26</sup> Cranmer will also go on to stress that only true believers have this presence of Christ; the Lord’s Supper is ineffective to those who do not believe. In the final chapter of the treatise Cranmer argues that the greatest blasphemy of the Mass is that the “papists” suggest,

that the priests make their mass a sacrifice propitiatory, to remit the sins as well of themselves as of other, both quick and dead... [t]hus, under pretence of holiness, the papistical priests have taken upon them to be Christ’s successors, and to make such an oblation and sacrifice as never create made but Christ alone, neither he made the same nay more times than once, and that was by his death upon the cross.<sup>27</sup>

While writing in his own manner, Cranmer likely had the Zurich agreement in mind and agreed with it on many points, most notably that only the elect really partake and that those who partake eat of Christ’s body and blood in a spiritual way since Christ is corporally in heaven.<sup>28</sup> Cranmer had taken steps to clarify the official position on the theology of the Lord’s Supper; he was aware that now further work needed to be done in terms of clarifying and reforming the liturgy. This would come in his second *Book of Common Prayer*.

The fact that the 1549 *Book of Common Prayer* was a temporary solution became clear as work on the next one began the following year. By early 1552 the book was finished and soon received the approval of parliament. The summer of 1552 represented a rare peaceful period in Edward’s reign and despite the book’s more thoroughly evangelical tone, it was met with much less opposition and no violence. The only real

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<sup>26</sup> Thomas Cranmer, “Defense of the True and Catholic Doctrine of the Sacrament” Bk. 3, Ch. 2 in *The Work of Thomas Cranmer* ed. G. E. Duffield (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), 124.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid Bk. 5, Ch. 1, 215.

<sup>28</sup> John Calvin, “Mutual Consent in regard to The Sacraments” in *John Calvin Tracts and Letters* vol. 2, ed. Henry Beveridge (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2009), 217-20.

opposition it faced was from the more radical end of the evangelicals who felt that it still did not go far enough. The most notable of these was a sermon by John Knox before the king. Knox had just previously been raised to the position of a king's chaplain by Northumberland. He used this opportunity to oppose the practice of kneeling when receiving the Lord's Supper as he felt that this implied veneration being directed to the elements. His argument was persuasive enough that the publication of the book was halted; however, Cranmer intervened and pushed the book through, adding a note which specified that the elements were not being worshiped by kneeling. The book was already in advanced stages of printing, so this note had to be added later and therefore was printed in black rather than red like the rest of the book, earning it the name "the black rubric".<sup>29</sup>

The book itself was significantly more evangelical than its predecessor and eliminated any possibility of the old service of the Mass to be found in its liturgy. The word Mass had been removed from the title of the section regarding the Lord's Supper which now read, "The Order for the Administration of the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion". The overall tone of this section was much more evangelical and there were also a few distinct changes that would have been noticed by the laity. First, those who partook of the bread did so by first taking it into their hands. Secondly, the bread itself was changed. The first book had sought to forge a compromise by changing the bread from the host which was used in the Catholic Mass—but by using something which would still resemble it. The bread served in the communion service would have been of

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<sup>29</sup> A more detailed discussion of these events is in Chapter 2.

central importance especially since previously the laity would have only received the bread and not wine. Therefore, the bread was the one point of direct physical contact they had during the service. Now their experience of it was changing drastically. Not only did they now hold it in their hands but the book commanded that, “to take away the superstition, which any person hath, or might have in the bread and wine, it shall suffice that the bread be such, as is usual to be eaten at the table with other meats, but the best and purest wheat bread, that conveniently may be gotten.”<sup>30</sup> Additionally, the word altar is removed along with any other words or phrases which could imply a sacrifice. This was mirrored in the churches by a removal of the altars and having them replaced with simple tables.<sup>31</sup> Overall, this second prayer book could be identified as a clearly Protestant document and was founded on many of the principles Cranmer had espoused in his 1550 *Defense*, notably that scriptural warrant was the best practice for determining the practice of the church. Cranmer had been conscious of other voices while composing the book. Martin Bucer is likely to have had a significant impact on its content, although Bucer’s death in 1551 limited any direct input that he could have had. Additionally, Cranmer had also clearly been influenced by other continental reformers, though while the book did borrow from those ideas it was not clearly either Calvinistic or Zwinglian. It is likely that this was intentional, as Cranmer had hoped to host a meeting in England of the various evangelical leaders and therefore focused on affirming what was agreed

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<sup>30</sup> “The Book of Common Prayer 1552” in *The Two Liturgies with other Documents set forth by authority In the Reign of King Edward the Sixth* ed. Joseph Ketley (Cambridge: The University Press, 1844), 283.

It is significant to note that by using bread “as is usual to be eaten at the table with other meats” this would have meant using leavened bread rather than the unleavened host which had been a distinctive of the Latin Church for centuries.

<sup>31</sup> Dickens, 276.

upon by all parties. Once this dream proved unlikely, Cranmer finally moved to make more decisive statements on the official doctrine of the English Church which were published in the *Forty-Two Articles*, these coming out only months before the death of Edward.

While they were afforded little time in which their effectiveness could be measured, the *Forty-Two Articles* represent the final and most decisively Protestant statement of the Edwardian era. The articles clearly lay out the doctrine of justification by faith alone and a belief in predestination, although not double predestination. Against the Catholic Church, the articles oppose its authority and denounce the doctrine of purgatory and mandatory celibacy. Here also the doctrine of the Lord's Supper is finally clearly laid out. Article 29 reads,

Transubstantiation, or the change of the substance of bread and wine into the substance of Christ's body and blood, cannot be proved by Holy Writ, but is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, and hath given occasion to many superstitions.

Forasmuch as the truth of man's nature requireth, that the body of one and the selfsame man cannot be at one time in diverse places, but must needs to be in one certain place; therefore the body of Christ cannot be present at one time in many and diverse places. And because, as Holy Scriptures doth teach, Christ was taken up into heaven, and there shall continue until the end of the world, a faithful man ought not either to believe or openly to confess the real and bodily presence, as they term it, of Christ's flesh and blood, in the sacrament of the Lord's supper. The sacrament of the Lord's supper was not commanded by Christ's ordinance to be kept carried about, lifted up nor worshipped.<sup>32</sup>

This is directly followed by an article proclaiming the finality of what Christ accomplished on the cross.

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<sup>32</sup> "The Forty-Two Articles" in *Documents of the English Reformation* ed. Gerald Bray (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 301-2.

The *Second Book of Common Prayer* followed up shortly thereafter by these articles made the evangelical position of the Church of England and its doctrine clear. However, this more decisive period was short lived.

### **Transition: The Beginning of Mary's Reign**

Any plans for pushing this new plan of reform further was tragically cut short when Edward died on July 6, 1553, at the age of 15. Edward and his officials had hatched a plan to keep the throne out of the hands of his half-sister Mary by changing the succession so that his cousin Lady Jane Grey (nee Seymour), who was married to Northumberland's son, would take the throne and carry on the evangelical agenda. While being an audacious attempt to preserve the work done under his reign the plan ultimately did not gain much popular support and was unsuccessful. This was in large part because Mary was never apprehended and therefore able to rally support and mount a revolt.<sup>33</sup> However, it was also impeded since a majority of the English people did not support the plan. They were more concerned about the proper line of succession being maintained than they were of having a queen who would support the reforms enacted during Edward's reign. Even evangelicals supported Mary on these grounds and she was proclaimed Queen after arriving in England in evangelical strongholds, some of which resented Northumberland for his part in putting down revolts. Jasper Ridley sums up the situation well, "[t]he people did not rally to Mary because she was a Catholic. They rose in defence of the right of hereditary succession to the Crown, and against the hated

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<sup>33</sup> MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer*, 542-3.

government of Northumberland.”<sup>34</sup> Ridley also points out that the commoners may not have been as aware of the extent that Mary had continued in Catholic practices and refused to follow the laws on religious practice set under Edward VI as this had been hidden from those outside of Edward’s inner circle. There may have also been a belief that Mary had promised to maintain the reforms of the church and to not marry a foreigner. It does not seem that she did make any such announcement but she did nothing to refute these claims at that time. However, knowledge of this did not keep some evangelical leaders such as John Hooper from campaigning for Mary.<sup>35</sup>

The religious climate in England during the early days of Mary’s reign is difficult to gauge. As already mentioned the acceptance of Mary as Queen was not motivated solely by religious reasons so it would be wrong to suggest that reform in England was not accepted by the people; however, it is also not accurate to suggest that the English people wholeheartedly embraced the Edwardian reforms. On this subject, Eamon Duffy offers some helpful insights. Duffy notes that the wills of many of the upper class reflect a degree of passivity toward the religious position of the country but not an embrace of reform. An example of this is a Lady Marney who, while writing her will in 1549, lays out plans for the payment of priests to sing for her soul—however she notes that if the laws do not allow it the money should be given to the poor. Duffy notes that while she expresses conformity her default position was still that of a Catholic.<sup>36</sup> Duffy later notes that while wills composed later in Edward VI’s reign bear little or no mention of

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<sup>34</sup> Jasper Ridley, *John Knox* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 145.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Duffy, 470.

intercession for the dead it unlikely that they would since by these later dates these practices were outlawed and official wills would have to go through official ecclesial channels.<sup>37</sup> The personal convictions of individual Englishwomen and men are difficult to ascertain. However, as the more decisive, and clearly non-Catholic, reforms had only happened a few years before Edward VI's death and previous reform had not been met with overwhelming support, it may be safe to assume that these changes in religious practice and belief had not been given enough time to thoroughly settle into English culture. Therefore, those who returned to the Mass after Mary ascended the throne, may not have been overly opposed to that move. In the upper classes, many seem to have been moved almost completely by political motives and aligned themselves with the religious convictions of whoever held power. Even Northumberland recanted and returned to the Catholic Church before he was executed for treason. There were others as well who did oppose the change in religion but wished to avoid persecution.<sup>38</sup> There were those on whom the reforms under Edward's reign had a larger impact. However, England as a nation had not yet become fully Protestant and many Englishmen and women found it simple to return to the Catholic Church.

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<sup>37</sup> Duffy, 504-5.

<sup>38</sup> In general, there were three options for those who preferred the evangelical reforms enacted by Cranmer. Recant and attend Mass, flee to the Continent or do neither and likely face a martyr's death. However, not all who remained in England and were not jailed or executed necessarily recanted there are a number who avoided this fate and also avoided having to officially recant their beliefs. (Dickens 301-307) For the many who did return to the Catholic Church and to Mass they would have fallen into one of the three categories mentioned, those who did so gratefully, those who did so indifferently, and those who did so only to avoid persecution. To ascertain the numbers within each group is difficult to do with any certainty and outside the scope of this study.

## Conclusion

Ultimately the goal to make England a true Protestant nation, expanding what had happened to a lesser degree on the continent in cities like Strasburg and Geneva, died with Edward VI. It had only become clear in the final few years of Edward's reign what that would have looked like. The Edwardian Reformation as led by Cranmer, was a balancing act of keeping several forces and tensions in check both between the conservative factions and the evangelicals and also between the more radical elements within the evangelical movement and the more cautious. For those more radical evangelicals the Edwardian period had represented a golden opportunity, but due to their influence being checked and the unfortunate timing of Edward VI's death they were left to face the frightening prospect of Mary's reign wondering what might have been.

John Knox was a member of the latter group and found himself comfortably aligned with men such as John Hooper and the Polish refugee John a' Lasco who pushed Cranmer and the government for further reform.<sup>39</sup> As we will see, Knox would soon reflect on this period of time with regret and come to believe that if reform had been pushed further and faster things might have been different. While Knox's role in the events just described was slight, the effect it had on him and eventual impact on his view of reform was great. It is to his role in this period that we now turn.

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<sup>39</sup> Hooper is often best known for his refusal to wear vestments.

## CHAPTER II: Knox in England

Knox arrived in England in late 1549, near the mid-point of Edward VI's reign. While Knox would become entangled in a number of disputes during his time in England, the five years (1549-1553) he spent there were a relatively calm period in his life. Immediately before arriving in England, he had sought refuge in the besieged castle of St. Andrews following the martyrdom of his mentor George Wishart. Following the castle's fall, he spent 19 months in forced labor on a French galley ship. After leaving England, following the death of Edward, he spent several years as a transient in exile before settling for a few years in Geneva. This was followed by his permanent return to Scotland where he was intimately involved in the reform effort in that country for which he is famous. This time in England represented a unique opportunity for Knox, which at the time he may not have fully appreciated. His time in England was the first where he was able to preach freely in a Protestant country, and as his star rose he was given a voice in the reformation that was happening in that country. While his ability to seriously affect change during his brief stay in England is negligible, the effect these experiences had on him is much clearer. This period would play a significant role in his formation into a pastor and preacher and his self-identification with those roles. This was a time when he was able to see the fruits of his labor in the pulpit and be assured of his call. But it was also a time marked by a number of failures, as he would later note looking back. These failures centered largely around matters of reform on a large scale, something he was perhaps not ready to engage in. However, by the time he left England to enter into

his second exile, he had gained experience and became more steadfast in his convictions of how to reform the Church. These would be lessons that stayed with him throughout his career; in this way England served as an important practical school for the emerging reformer.

### **Knox's Early Influences**

By the time Knox arrived in England he had already become an outspoken member of the evangelical cause. While he had only publicly aligned himself with the evangelicals shortly before and had little chance to exercise his abilities as a reformer, he appears to have arrived in England with strong opinions, yet possibly not yet fully formed, ideas about reform. While little is known about his early life and what led him to embrace the message of the reformers, his time spent under the Scottish preacher George Wishart as well as his time in the besieged castle at St. Andrew's show the early influences on his way of thinking and help to demonstrate his mindset as he arrived in England.

While Knox was born into a Europe on the brink of Reformation, the Scotland of his youth and early adulthood remained devoutly Catholic. It is possible he would have been exposed to some of Luther's writings as a young man, but the Scottish government did its best to censor any Lutheran writings and hindered their circulation. Knox himself was employed by the Church and had received an excellent education at the University of St. Andrews under the tutelage of John Mair (or Major). Mair had recently returned to his native Scotland from a prestigious post at the University of Paris. Under Mair, Knox

would have received an education on par with many on the Continent and would have been exposed to wider systems of thought, including Mair's conciliarism.<sup>1</sup> He would have likely also been exposed to humanist thought at this point but did not receive the same humanist education which a number of other reformers embraced. Instead Knox seems to have maintained a scholastic approach to reasoning.<sup>2</sup> While educated and eventually ordained for the priesthood, Knox did not serve as a parish priest but instead became a notary apostolic, the equivalent of a modern-day notary or small town lawyer.

While Knox does not give a full account of how he became convinced of the evangelical position he does leave some hints. He seems to have been influenced by the preaching of Thomas Gillem and John Rough. It is possibly through Gillem that Knox first heard the evangelical message. However, Knox downplays the effect of earlier preachers on him. These early influences likely date to 1543 when, following the death of James V, the climate in Scotland became briefly more open to Reformation ideas. Personally, Knox later noted that John 17 had a large impact on him calling it his "first ancre [anchor]." Knox seems to have found in this passage personal identification with Christ as he understood Christ's prayer in that chapter to include himself as well. It also appears that through this passage he came to an understanding of the connection between justification, sanctification, and predestination and how they are focused on Christ, leading him to the key Reformation principle of justification by faith (in Christ) alone.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Dawson, *John Knox*, 16-17. Dawson notes that while Mair was a devout Catholic, his conciliarism stance would have exposed Knox, possibly for the first time, to the fallibility of the pope and the need for reform in the Church.

<sup>2</sup> An example of this is below in the *Vindication of the Doctrine that the Sacrifice of the Mass is Idolatry*; he bases his argument around two syllogisms, a common scholastic method of argumentation.

<sup>3</sup> Dawson, *John Knox*, 23-28.

During this time Knox had ceased to be a priest and had taken a job tutoring the sons of noblemen sympathetic to the evangelical cause. However, since this occupation was not abnormal for a man of his position, Knox had likely not made his renunciation of the Church and his role there within publicly known. This changed when he met George Wishart.

Wishart was the person who would have by far the greatest impact on Knox's early evangelical development. While Knox spent a short amount of time with him—only about five months in 1547—the impact Wishart had on Knox was great. It is perhaps telling that it is at this point that Knox chooses to introduce himself in his *History of the Reformation of Scotland*.<sup>4</sup> Knox took up a post in Wishart's company as a sword-wielding bodyguard, although it is not clear if he ever used the sword or intended to. He was seemingly in awe of the man who he referred to as "Master George" and here Knox began in earnest his evangelical education. In large part, this education likely came predominantly from hearing Wishart's sermons and from personal conversations with him and others in his retinue. Before returning to Scotland, Wishart had spent a good deal of time on the continent and was able to visit Reformation centers personally. It is also quite likely that Knox would have been exposed to the *First Helvetic Confession*, which Wishart had translated and brought back with him.

This confession had been formulated several years earlier in Basel by Heinrich Bullinger and other reformers there. Martin Bucer and Wolfgang Capito also had some influence on it. There are a number of distinctives within the confession that can be seen

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<sup>4</sup> Knox, *History* vol. I, 67.

in the ministry of Wishart and later in that of Knox, including the centrality and authority of scripture and the importance of preaching.<sup>5</sup> Both of these elements proved to be defining marks of Knox's ministry. Wishart's own unique style of outdoor preaching, which included dramatic flair, likely had a large impact on Knox as a preacher as well because Knox became known for his dramatic use of language and skills as an orator that could captivate and persuade audiences.<sup>6</sup> It seems likely that Wishart also set the model of prophet that Knox would follow later. In his *History* Knox makes a point of recounting instances when Wishart spoke in a prophetic vein—in particular, an occasion in Knox's hometown of Haddington. In this sermon Knox notes that Wishart strays from his text to condemn the people and the town. Knox records him as saying,

I have heard of thee, Haddington, that in thee would have been at a vain Clerk play two or three thousand people; and now to hear the messenger of the Eternal God, of all thy town nor parish can not be numbered a hundred persons. Sore and fearful shall the plagues be that shall ensue this thy contempt: with fire and sword thou shalt be plagued; yea, thou Haddington, in special, strangers shall possess thee, and you, the present inhabitants shall either in bondage serve your enemies, or else ye shall be chased from your own habitations; and that because ye have not known, nor will not know the time of God's merciful visitation.<sup>7</sup>

Later on in his *History*, Knox would claim that this prophecy had been fulfilled after English troops who had been recalled ransacked and burnt a portion of the town before leaving.<sup>8</sup> The importance of the pastor was also clear in the *Helvetic Confession*, which spoke of the pastor as caring for “the Lordes flocke” and Christ as being the proper

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<sup>5</sup> “The Confession of Faith of the Churches of Switzerland,” I., II. and XII. in *The Miscellany of the Wodrow Society* vol. I trans. George Wishart ed. David Laing (Edinburgh: The Wodrow Society, 1844), 11, 15.

<sup>6</sup> Dawson, *John Knox*, 18.

<sup>7</sup> Knox, *History* vol. I, 68.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, 113.

Shepherd of the church; if Knox did read these words, the imagery would have appealed to him, this focus on the “flock” as a key purpose for pastoral ministry became clear to him.<sup>9</sup>

The *Confession* seems to have had its greatest impact on Knox in its articulation of the doctrine of the Lord’s Supper. Richard Greaves suggests that Knox would have already been exposed to Lutheran and Zwinglian views on the Lord’s Supper; however, Knox’s own thought can be seen to be more in keeping with the *Helvetic Confession*, which was a compromise of Bullinger and Bucer’s views on the Lord’s Supper.<sup>10</sup> The *Confession* itself can be seen as a midway point between the Lutheran and Zwinglian views and laid the groundwork for the later *Consensus Tigurinus*, which also mirrored the view Cranmer put forward in England. On the subject of the Lord’s Supper, Wishart’s translation of *The First Helvetic Confession* reads,

But the misticall supper is in the which the Lorde offereth his body and his blode, that is, his owne selfe, verily, to his owne, for this entent he myghte lyue more and more in them, and they in hym. Not so that the body and blode of the Lorde are communed naturally to the bread and wyne, or closed in them as in one place or put in them by any carnal or meruelous presence; but bycause the body and blode of our Lorde are receyued verily of one faithful soule, and because the bread and the wyne by the institucion of the Lorde, are tokens be whiche the very communion or participacyon of the Lordes body and blode are exhibited of the Lorde himself, through the mynistracion of the church, not to be a meat corruptible of the belly, but to be a noryshement and meat of eternal lyfe.<sup>11</sup>

Here the spiritual nature of the sacrament is clearly proclaimed, going farther than the Zwinglian memorial view<sup>12</sup>, but also clearly denying the corporal presence of Christ in

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<sup>9</sup> “The Confession of Faith of the Churches of Switzerland,” XVI. 16.

<sup>10</sup> Richard L. Greaves, “John Knox, the Reformed Tradition, and the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper” in *Archiv Fur Reformationsgeschichte* 1975, 239.

<sup>11</sup> “The Confession of Faith of the Churches of Switzerland,” XXII. 19.

the sacrament. This section goes on to stress the importance of the horizontal bond between believers partaking of the sacrament; this also meant that the Lord's Supper was open only to and effective for believers.

The extent of Knox's personal development on the doctrine of the Lord's Supper is debatable. Knox certainly was influenced by Calvin later in his life. However, Knox's view appears to remain broadly Reformed rather than coming down firmly on the side of any thinker. This approach can be found in the *The First Helvetic Confession*, and the merged influence of Bullinger and Bucer which Greaves suggests is the basis for Knox's view of the sacrament.<sup>13</sup> If his reflection in his *History* is accurate, it would seem that his doctrine changed little after this point. He remarks that the Lord's Supper over which he presided in the castle in St. Andrews was performed "in the same purity that now it is ministered in the churches of Scotland."<sup>14</sup> While this may have been Knox's rose-colored view of the past, writing in 1566 almost two decades after the event, it is clear that according to his understanding his view of the reformed manner of the Lord's Supper has not changed since those early days.

The brief time that Knox spent among the Castilians —the name given to those who took the castle at St. Andrews — in the besieged castle at St. Andrews gave him his first opportunity to put what he had learned into practice. Following the capture, trial,

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<sup>12</sup> Greaves also notes that Bullinger viewed the Lord's Supper "primarily as a present communion rather than the remembrance of something past." (243)

<sup>13</sup> Greaves, "John Knox, the Reformed Tradition, and the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper," 253. Greaves also notes that in the *Scots Confession* which Knox played a significant role in writing in 1560 the authors "stop just short of Calvin's symbolic instrumentalism, and appear to reflect the Bucer-Bullinger compromise worked out in the *First Helvetic Confession*." (251)

<sup>14</sup> Knox, *History* vol. I, 93.

and execution of George Wishart, Cardinal Beaton, who had ordered these actions, was assassinated by a group led by several Scottish lairds in May, 1546. This group then took the Castle of St. Andrews and was able to control it for some time while repealing the forces of Regent Arran. Deeming it the safest and most convenient refuge in the circumstances, Knox arrived there soon after with his three pupils in tow. Initially, Knox primarily focused on the task of educating his pupils but he soon became involved in the religious debates happening in the castle. This period represents a brief and unique time when both reformers and Catholics openly debated each other and neither side incurred punishment. The leading evangelical preachers among the Castilians were John Rough and Henry Balvanves. Knox began by making notes for them to use in their sermons and arguments against the Catholics, but soon, overwhelmed by the work, Rough and Balanves appealed to Knox to begin to serve as a preacher himself. Initially, Knox refused their requests. However, unwilling to take no for an answer, Rough publicly called on Knox during one of his sermons. He exhorted him by God and out of care for Rough himself who was overworked to “take upon you the public office and charge of preaching, even as ye look to avoid God’s heavy displeasure, and desire that he shall multiply his graces with you.”<sup>15</sup> Rough then asked for the congregation’s agreement, which they gave. Knox was overwhelmed by this, perhaps unexpected, public calling. He describes that he, “abashed, burst forth in most abundant tears, and withdrew himself to his chamber.”<sup>16</sup> He remained there distraught until finally heeding the call to preach. Due to Knox’s personal identification with being a preacher later in his career, it may

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<sup>15</sup> Knox, *History* vol. I, 83.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

seem surprising that he was so reluctant to take on this calling at this point. However, Knox's trepidation at responding to this calling was not without reason. This very likely represented to him a line that once crossed he could not go back on and one that could have dire consequences. He was daily reminded of the potential cost of preaching, now living in the castle where Wishart had been jailed and executed. It is also worth noting that the reverence and importance Knox later placed on his vocation as a preacher is tied in with the importance of his call to it from men, the congregation, and from God.<sup>17</sup>

While initially reluctant, Knox soon entered the fray and his first sermon surpassed anything that had previously been preached in the castle. Typical of his later style, Knox took for his text an Old Testament prophecy, in this case Daniel 7. He used this passage to draw a connection between the true church in his day, which he said follows the voice of Jesus Christ, and the exiled nation of Israel: a theme which he would often repeat. He then turned his focus directly on the "corruptions of the Papistry." He denounced the entire Catholic Church as against Christ and said, therefore, it should be called the Anti-Christ. He supported this claim by arguing that Christ plainly taught justification by faith alone but the "papists" have added to it. He went on to decry the added laws and ceremonies of the Church and ridicule the idea of papal authority.<sup>18</sup> This represents a key theme for Knox; anything added to the words of Christ or Scripture is an invention of man and therefore wrong and even against Christ. The force of his words

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<sup>17</sup> Carol Edington discusses the impact of this call in her chapter "Knox and the Castilians." She notes that by this point Knox seems to disregard his priestly ordination and required a further confirmation of call. Therefore, the call Knox received in St. Andrews equipped him to enter into his future ministry assured of God's approval.

Carol Edington, "Knox and the Castilians" in *John Knox and the British Reformations* ed. Roger A. Mason (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 1998), 29-50.

<sup>18</sup> Knox, *History* vol. 1, 84-5.

are clear in the reaction Knox recorded to his sermon, even noting that some thought it was likely that having spoken in more plain terms than Wishart had, he would meet a similar fate.<sup>19</sup>

Knox did not face a trial but was soon brought before the Subprior of St. Andrews, John Winram, along with other pastors to address nine articles they had drafted. The articles in question focused on denouncing the pope, purgatory, and declaring that the “Mass is abominable idolatry, blasphemous to the death of Christ, and a profanation of the Lord’s Supper.”<sup>20</sup> From the account Knox gives, he appears to be the spokesman and it is a victory for him. The approach Knox takes here is echoed in his later disputes on these matters.<sup>21</sup> He focuses on the Mass, declaring that it is an invention of man and cannot be supported by scripture. Therefore, it is for man and his pleasure rather than for God’s. Knox took the hard line that not only were the Mass and other ceremonies of the church evil because they had not been prescribed in the Bible, but that God’s word “damns your ceremonies.” Friar Arbuckle, who had taken up the argument, believed that he could prove that the Mass was instituted by God. However, he made the misstep of suggesting that the Holy Spirit had come after the apostles had written Scripture for which he was roundly denounced and the argument swung decisively in the

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 86. It should be pointed out that while the castle afforded the reformers some safety, Catholic leaders remained there. Since there was relatively free passage in and out of the castle, many heard Knox’s sermon, including his former teacher John Mair (although it is possible that he was still in St. Andrews in his teaching post).

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 87.

<sup>21</sup> It should be kept in mind that for these exchanges, we rely on the account given by Knox written about 20 years later. Therefore, it is possible that he gives himself better arguments than he might have actually used at this point. However, it is likely that the arguments at least in summary are accurate given that many who would have witnessed them, including Winram, were still alive at the time Knox was writing.

reformers favor.<sup>22</sup> This victory coming soon after his first sermon would surely have buoyed Knox's confidence. He took a similar line as he had in his sermon, that ceremonies not prescribed in scripture should be done away with. Not only did these opportunities give Knox the chance to express his own understanding of the evangelical message and its practices, but he was sure to see his success as vindication for his position and his abilities. Knox seems to be most concerned about applying this principle to the celebration of the Lord's Supper, and explaining the problems with the Catholic Mass. It quickly became a key issue of reform for him.

Another notable occurrence from Knox's time at St. Andrews happened during an outbreak of plague while the castle was under attack. Knox demonstrated his providential understanding of God's actions, possibly inspired by Wishart's own prophetic proclamations, and decreed that the plague was God's judgment and that those taking refuge in the castle should not be trusting in "the thickness of their walls". He also refuted claims that they would be delivered by the English and said that instead they would be carried off to "a strange country."<sup>23</sup> The fact that he was proved right in this claim helped to solidify his prophetic call in the minds of himself and others. After responding so hesitantly to his call at St. Andrews initially, in a short space of time Knox grew into a dominant and authoritative voice there. While Knox only spent a few short months at St. Andrews, this time set established Knox in his career as a reformer and set

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 88-90.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 95-6.

in place his understanding of his call as preacher and pastor, which would soon be further revealed.

As Knox had predicted, the English ships did not arrive in time. Instead, a French fleet of ships came and bombarded the castle. Those inside were forced to surrender but chose to surrender to the French rather than to the Scottish Regent as they believed they would fare better under the French. As a result, Knox and many of his companions spent the next 19 months as galley slaves or forsares aboard a French ship. Knox makes little mention of the conditions or their effects on him in his history but instead focuses on the captives' nonconformity to the Catholic ceremonies of their captors. This culminated in one of them throwing a small statue of the Virgin Mary overboard when instructed to kiss it.<sup>24</sup> It appears that Knox, now comfortable in his pastor leadership role, was active among the prisoners, giving both encouragement and advice. Fortunately for Knox, his time in the hands of the French was brought to an end in the spring of 1549 after the English negotiated his release.

### **An English Pastor**

Knox's appointment to Berwick represented his first official pastoral duties. It was also a unique appointment. Berwick lay in the border lands of England and was therefore about as close to Scotland as Knox could get. It was a military fort and since England was still at this time at war with Scotland, a large percentage of Berwick's population were soldiers or men connected to the military, meaning that the population

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<sup>24</sup> Dawson, *John Knox*, 55-56.

fluctuated and was also predominantly male. This made for a volatile environment, although one not entirely foreign to Knox after his experiences at St. Andrews and on the French ship. There would have also been a large Scottish population living there. Given the town's proximity to the border, a number of immigrants would have found their way over to the town. Some would have left Scotland for religious reasons and in them Knox would have found special kinship. It seems that Knox fit in well in this rough and tumble border town. His experience here also gave him his first real opportunity to put his pastoral and preaching call into action, and it would seem that his experience here validated that call. Years later when debating Mary Queen of Scots he said that—contrary to the defaming rumors she had heard about his time in England—while he was in Berwick “there was a great quietness all the time that I remained there.”<sup>25</sup> This posting also gave Knox a good deal of freedom. Since he was so far from London and in a post that others might find undesirable, he likely operated with a good deal of autonomy. It was also common that exiled pastors at this time would be allowed a fair amount of freedom, such as the Pole John a' Lasco's Stranger's Church in London, and this freedom may have extended to Knox as well.<sup>26</sup>

Knox arrived in Berwick around the same time the *First Book of Common Prayer* was published, and while he likely received the book, it appears that the practice he set up in his congregation did not completely conform to it. Evidence of how Knox led the Lord's Supper in his early days in England can be found in a fragment entitled, “The practies of the Lorde's Supper yewsed in Barvike-upon-Twyed by Johne Knoxe, precher

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<sup>25</sup> Knox, *History* vol. II, 15.

<sup>26</sup> Dawson, *John Knox*, 60.

to that congregation in the Church there.”<sup>27</sup> This document gives a portion of the service, which focuses on preparing the congregation for the sacrament through Scripture reading and prayer. Of importance is both the understanding of the person’s unworthiness before God coupled with the need for self-examination based on 1 Corinthians 2:17-32. This is followed by an assurance of God’s great mercy. Aside from this apparently notable difference from the order prescribed in the 1549 *Book of Common Prayer*, any teaching on the nature of the Lord’s Supper is missing from this fragment. However, Knox’s *A Summary, According to the Holy Scriptures of the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper*, which likely also dates from his time in Berwick can be of use to understand his thinking at this point.<sup>28</sup> This brief text represents a mostly positive articulation by Knox of his understanding of the Lord’s Supper. In his opening lines, he resembles Calvin as he claims that through the sacrament Christ “lifteth us up unto hevinlie and invisibill things.”<sup>29</sup> He remains concentrated not on the individual’s

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<sup>27</sup> John Knox, “The Practice of the Lord’s Supper used in Berwick by John Knox,” in *John Knox and the Church of England, His Work in Her Pulpit and His Influence Upon her Liturgy, Articles, and Parties* ed. Peter Lorimer (London: Henry S. King & Co., 1875) 290-92. Lorimer notes that this fragment is “unquestionably from Knox’s own hand. It has the unmistakable signatures of his style of thought and feeling and diction.” (292) Therefore, it is likely to date from 1549 or 1550 as those were the years when he was chiefly preoccupied with Berwick. However, it should be noted that the section ends with “A Prayer for the Queen’s Majestic.” This seems to imply that this copy was written during Queen Elizabeth’s reign since it is unlikely that it would have been written during the reign of Queen Mary. Lorimer maintains that this Order is nevertheless original to Knox and the extant text that he published is likely a copy from the period that Knox was present there. This seems likely, or at the very least that it is inspired by the practice that Knox instituted while he was there. Therefore, we can use it to give an indication on his preferred practice for the Lord’s Supper around the time of 1549/50. This also seems to give an indication on the influence he had on this community; otherwise it seems unlikely that his name would appear in the title.

<sup>28</sup> David Laing, who edited *The Works of John Knox*, admits that the date of the *Summary* is unknown; however, he dates it to 1550 as it appeared as an appendix to the *A Vindication of the Doctrine that the Sacrifice of the Mass is Idolatry* which Knox certainly gave in 1550. Lorimer suggests that this date is correct and that it is likely that this *Summary* was meant to be a part of the above mentioned order as the declaration following the reading from 1 Corinthians, see Lorimer 293. Again, while the exact date for this work is not known it seems the majority of the evidence places it during this time period and definitely not much later as it was first published for distribution in 1556.

<sup>29</sup> Knox, *Works*, 3:73. Cf. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 4.17.31.

experience during the Lord's Supper but on the communal practice of the body with Christ as its head. Maintaining his spiritual understanding of Christ's presence, he writes that the focus of the Lord's Supper is not on physical eating and drinking but rather receiving spiritual sustenance for the soul. However, he is also quick to note that the Lord's Supper is not open to all; while it can be understood as having a spiritual effect, it is not a work and does not forgive sins or bring salvation, therefore only believers should partake. In fact, a congregation's doctrine of the Lord's Supper is a distinguishing mark on them showing what type of church they are and who could join. He writes, "whairin we schaw what kind of doctrine we profess; and what Congregatioun we joyne our selves unto; and lykwyse, that it is a band of mutuall love amangis us."<sup>30</sup> Finally, Knox ends with his basis for his belief: that this is the practice described in the Scriptures and is as Jesus Christ gave it. However, he does note that some might argue that the clear meaning of Christ's words "This is my bodie" are meant to be taken literally. Knox refutes this arguing that this sacrament has been received spiritually, citing 1 Corinthians 2 in the margin where Paul makes a similar argument that they receive knowledge of Christ not by worldly wisdom but through the Spirit. He concludes by arguing that the early Church Fathers agreed with his understanding.<sup>31</sup> While this may be Knox's first positive articulation of the Lord's Supper he still appears consistent with his thought in Scotland and the broadly Reformed position given in *The First Helvetic Confession*. He has retained a belief in the spiritual presence of Christ, although he does not define it. He

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<sup>30</sup> Knox, *Works*, 3:74.

<sup>31</sup> Knox, *Works*, 3:75. Here Knox cites "St Augustine, St. Hierome (Jerome), Fulgentius, Vigilius, Origines, and many other godlie wrytteris."

also places a large emphasis on the horizontal aspect of the Lord's Supper to the extent that non-believers should be excluded, the same position articulated in the confession.

While he was granted a fair amount of freedom during his time in Berwick, Knox's divergent practices did not go unnoticed in conservative Northern England. In that same year, 1550, he was called before the Council of the North by the conservative Bishop Turnbull to explain his practices. He used this opportunity to launch a full-blown attack on the Catholic Mass which he titled *A Vindication of the Doctrine that the Sacrifice of the Mass is Idolatry*. He begins this address more cordially than normal and even suggests that the Catholics act out of good intention when celebrating the Mass; nevertheless, he says it is idolatrous and blasphemous. Again, his appeal is to Scripture and is asked to be judged on its basis alone. To make his argument he employs the use of syllogisms. In the first, he sets out to argue that the Mass is idolatry. He makes his argument: "All wirchipping, honoring, or servie inventit by the braine of man in the religioun of God, without his own express commandment, is Idolatrie: The Masse is inventit be the braine of man, without any commandement of God: Thairfoir it is Idolatrie."<sup>32</sup> His main argument here is that even though it may have been created with good intentions, the Mass is not commanded by God and therefore contrary to him. To make this point he uses a number of stories from the Old Testament where worship was given to God in an inappropriate way and God's wrath burned against the perpetrators. He focuses on Saul who offered up a sacrifice without Samuel and then later did not destroy all the Amaleckites and their possessions because he thought it would be better to keep some in order to offer a sacrifice to God. Samuel, Knox says, rebukes Saul on these

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<sup>32</sup> Knox, *Works*, 3:34.

occasions, saying that God requires obedience to his word, in fact “no sin is more odious in Godis presence than to disobey his voice; for that eseameth God so odious, that he doith compare it to the two synnis most abominabill, Incantation and Idolatrie: so that disobedience to his voice is verie Idolatrie.”<sup>33</sup> He also uses the example of Aaron’s sons, the priests who offered a sacrifice after their own desires and not God’s and were therefore destroyed. Knox then applies this principle to the history of the Church to show how it has added many ceremonies that are not commanded by God’s word and in some cases have paid the price. He focuses on the litany instituted by Gregory the Great which invoked the saints. Gregory had instructed the people to perform a number of processions in Rome as an act of repentance in response the plague. A portion of the people dropped dead during these processions—likely because they had contracted the plague—and Knox links this to punishment for the extra-biblical processions similar to the events in biblical history he just recounted.<sup>34</sup> In this rather lengthy discussion, Knox goes into greater depth than in other places on the problems with the Mass and Catholic ceremony in general and attacks the Catholic Church on a number of issues. He makes his position clear on authority as well. He is aware that the Catholics would respond that the Church has the authority of God to institute ceremonies as it is God’s spokesman on earth. In response to this, Knox asks who is the true head of the Church; everyone would agree that it is Christ, he says. Therefore, since in Scripture they have the words of Christ, why should they not follow what he has said rather than “Farrane Princes?”<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 37.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 41.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

Another main contention Knox has with the Mass becomes clear in his second syllogism. Here he says, "All honoring or sevice of God, whairunto is addit a wickit opinioun, is aboinatioun. Unto the Masse is addit a wickit opinioun. Thairfoir it is abominatioun."<sup>36</sup> He claims that it is clear that a wicked opinion has been added because the Mass claims to be "a Sacrifice and oblatioun for the synnis of the quick and the deid," but he adds, "remissioun of synnis cumeth onlie of the meir mercie of God, without all deserving of us, or of our work proceeding of oure selvs."<sup>37</sup> Knox goes on to say that not only is this a wicked and false opinion which has been added but that it in fact blasphemous because it means that either Christ's sacrifice was not sufficient or that God the Father forgets Christ's sacrifice and needs to be reminded over and over of it in order to forgive people. Finally, he goes so far as to say that if the Mass is a true sacrifice and offering for sin, then there must be death, so then he argues that in the Mass you are claiming to kill Jesus again and again. Knox finishes this discussion by arguing for the difference between the Mass and the Lord's Supper. Here, when describing the Lord's Supper, he describes it in memorial terms, "for the Lordis Supper was institutit to be a perpetuall memorie of theis benefittis whilk[which] we haif ressavit be Jesus Chryst, and be his death."<sup>38</sup> Knox makes the cutting argument that in the Lord's Supper, participants are debtors, while in the Mass, God is the debtor awaiting the sacrifice. He also helpfully describes the practice of the Lord's Supper here. He says that all sat a common table,

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 52.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 54.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 64.

minister and congregates on the same level, and all are dressed in similar attire, no vestments wore by the minister, and all eat of one bread and drink of one cup.<sup>39</sup>

There would have been a response or at least some discussion at this meeting of the Council of the North other than Knox's address; however, whatever the nature of that discussion was, it has been lost. It seems that to some degree Knox won this encounter and was allowed to continue in his practice as before. It is possible that this victory of Knox was less due to the effectiveness of his arguments but rather because he chose to starkly contrast the Lord's Supper with the Mass rather than debate different approaches to the Lord's Supper which had been accepted by evangelicals. Therefore, for Tunstal to defend the Mass would have put him in opposition to the clear winds of change happening in England at the time, something he appears unwilling to do at this point. In the wider context, Knox's arguments were forceful but not entirely unique and it does not appear that at this point they influenced thought on the national stage. Debates on this level were already taking place with John Hooper leading the charge for more radical change and practice similar to Knox; notably, he had also opposed wearing vestments.<sup>40</sup> Knox does clearly state here that the practice in the congregations under his care was for the participants to be seated at a common table. This likely would have been a practice in the minority, especially in the North. The 1549 *Book of Common Prayer* did not specifically command kneeling, so Knox was not expressly disobeying it; however, it would have been understood that this was the commonly accepted and recommended

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 68.

<sup>40</sup> Dawson, *John Knox*, 61.

practice.<sup>41</sup> While this position did align him with other more radical preachers such as Hooper and a' Lasco, it was also a minority position and one which Cranmer and others who had a strong voice in directing the Church of England did not share. In this encounter, Knox does not appear to have changed his approach on the Lord's Supper although he does appear to have developed the strength of his argument and appears to be growing in confidence in his ability to argue his position—confidence which likely grew following this encounter. However, given the freedom he had been given at this time, he may have had an overinflated sense of his ability to influence change in England, something he would be made aware of in the coming years.

### **“The Black Rubric”**

Soon after his appearance before the Council of the North, Knox began to rise in prominence and was given the added responsibility of pastoring a church in Newcastle, a much larger and more important northern center. During this time, he still maintained contact with Berwick and traveled there to preach often. This rise seems to relate to Knox catching the eye of the Duke of Northumberland, as, around this time, Knox was also added to the list of the King's chaplains. This position, as well as increasing his income, drew him into the wider national ecclesial context and he soon became more vocal on matters of national importance. Notably by 1552 he was already warning against the possibility of the ascension of the Catholic Mary as well as a number of hidden Catholics in government. Knox may have been more sensitive to the possibility

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<sup>41</sup> Greaves, “John Knox, the Reformed Tradition, and the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper”, 246.

of the chaos following the death of a monarch than others in England given his personal experience in the uncertainty following the unexpected death of James V in Scotland.<sup>42</sup> In a post-Henry VIII England these types of statements could be seen as potentially treasonous, in fact, several noblemen took issue with Knox's words and complained but their complaint was dismissed by Northumberland. Being less familiar with English culture, Knox may not have been fully aware of the potential implications of what he was saying or it is possible that he did not care, as was likely the case when he denounced Northumberland for the execution of Somerset. Knox would have been more aware of the debt he owed to Northumberland for his current position and the power he currently wielded.<sup>43</sup> Either way these sermons demonstrate the early seeds of Knox's indifferent attitude to political norms when he felt God's Word was being disobeyed.

In September of 1552, he appeared before King Edward VI and his court to deliver a sermon. Neither the opportunity this gave him, nor its timing, was lost on Knox. The second *Book of Common Prayer* had been completed and was set to be published and enforced by All Saints Day.<sup>44</sup> Knox used this sermon to rail against the practice of kneeling at the Lord's Supper, a stance Hooper had previously taken without success against Cranmer and one being practiced in Jan a' Lasco's Stranger Church. Knox's sermon was well received by the King and his Privy Council and had an immediate effect. Despite the book having already been approved by Parliament and its printing begun, the Council ordered its printing be halted "until certain faults therein be

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<sup>42</sup> Dawson, *John Knox*, 62.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 63.

<sup>44</sup> November 1.

corrected.”<sup>45</sup> Cranmer had been absent during these events and was informed in a letter from the Council. He responded with an authoritative letter which stymied the drive to make changes to the book. The main thrust of Cranmer’s argument was a political one: the book had been prepared in the proper way, with learned men advising its construction, and now parliament had approved it and it had received royal ascent. Therefore, a private person or even the Privy Council did not have the authority to change it. While this argument alone seems to have largely carried the day, Cranmer backed it up with other arguments directed at Knox and those of like mind. The main argument of Knox and others was that the Church’s practice should be based solely on the words of Scripture and should not go beyond it. Cranmer pointed out that this was the same method which was employed by the Anabaptists. This association would have had its desired effect, as Knox also openly opposed the Anabaptists on a number of occasions. Additionally, England at this time was especially wary of religious radicalism and the social consequences which could result; therefore, linking Knox and others with them would have been damning.<sup>46</sup> Finally, Cranmer attacks Knox on his own grounds. Cranmer noted that contemporary scholarship showed that the custom of Jesus and his disciples would have resembled “the Tartars and Turks” of their own day which is to recline at the table. Or as he wrote, “to eat their meat lying upon the ground.” Again, Cranmer seems to be pointing out the uncomfortable logical consequences of his opponent’s view.<sup>47</sup> It should be noted that as seen above Cranmer held a position in

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<sup>45</sup> Lorimer, 109. Here Lorimer records the Register of the Privy Council which records a letter to the printer Grafton with the instruction given above.

<sup>46</sup> MacCulloch, *Cranmer*, 526.

<sup>47</sup> Lorimer, 103-105.

regards to the doctrine of the Lord's Supper as espoused by Calvin and Bullinger in *Consensus Tigurinus* which was similar to *The First Helvetic Confession* and Knox would have agreed to. Therefore, there is little, if any, difference in their theological position on the Lord's Supper; instead this dispute was solely about practice and in the wider framework about the advancement of reform in England.

The result of this debate was the so-called "Black Rubric" which clarified that kneeling did not imply a veneration of the elements or in fact a real corporal presence in the elements.<sup>48</sup> The late date at which it was entered in the book meant that it was not included in the text, but was an insert and was printed in black ink rather than the red of the rest of the book: hence the rubric's name. Debate surrounding the significance of the rubric began soon after its publication. MacCulloch notes that only two years later Catholic Dr. Hugh Weston accused Knox of taking away the adoration of Christ in the sacrament. Years later Lorimer additionally suggested that the rubric represented a victory for Knox and shows the significance of his influence. Contrary to this, MacCulloch demonstrates how Knox eventually signed the *Forty-Two Articles*, elements of which both he and others initially opposed as well, which included an endorsement of the 1552 *Book of Common Prayer*. Lorimer also argues that Knox and others had influence in shaping this article, but while they may have curtailed its original force, the final article, which they signed, stated that all things in the book "are godly, and in no point repugnant to the wholesome doctrine of the Gospel," and later on that it "neither hath it anything that of itself is superstitious or ungodly."<sup>49</sup> The argument contained in

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<sup>48</sup> "The Book of Common Prayer 1552", 283.

<sup>49</sup> "The Forty-Two Articles", 306-7; Lorimer, 126-7.

the rubric does not seem to represent a change to Cranmer's stance but instead is a declaration that kneeling does not mean adoration or real presence. While it could be seen as a small victory that Knox's argument resulted in the need for this clarification, it also freed the act of kneeling from theological attacks and therefore ensured its maintenance as a practice in the church, a consequence Knox would not have hoped for.<sup>50</sup>

Knox's capitulation to the official position can be seen in his letter to his congregation in Berwick in which he instructed them to follow the book and kneel during communion. The purpose of this letter seems to be the need to address the potentially awkward situation he had placed Berwick in, that while there Knox had instructed them not to kneel but sit during the Lord's Supper, now the official *Book of Common Prayer* instructed them to kneel. Should they oppose the book and follow the practice Knox had instructed them in or adhere to the official statement in the book? While the purpose of this letter seems to be to put their mind at rest, he takes a roundabout approach to that topic and first spends the majority of the letter on other topics relating to more general questions of the Christian life. It is notable that he adds in the letter advice on maintaining their course should events in England change. Regarding this he does not seem to claim any divine foreknowledge but simply consistently exercised a more pessimistic outlook than many of the other preachers in England. While he does address important issues in this first section of the letter, it is clear that he is reluctant to get to his real purpose for writing. He finally addresses the issue of kneeling near the end of this letter noting that he "nother repent nor recant that my former doctrine" and he, "muche

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<sup>50</sup> MacCulloch, *Cranmer*, 527-29.

preferre sitting at the Lord's Table either to kneling standing or goyng at the actioun of that misticall souper."<sup>51</sup> But he notes that he is only one voice among many and that submission should be given to the magistrates. He then outlines three reasons why he believes it is acceptable to follow the practice of kneeling. First, it had been explained that "kneling is not reteyned in the Lord's Souper for maintenance of anye superstitioun, much less that anye adoratioun apperteaneth to anye realle presence of Christ's bodye."<sup>52</sup> Second, that it is clear that kneeling was not instituted by Christ but by men as they saw fit. Finally, that he is not to be interfered with but allowed to follow his own conscience and practice. Despite this allowance, it remains clear that Knox does not approve of this practice and is unwilling to follow it himself, but he does not see it as a point worthy of losing unity in the Church over.

Soon after the conclusion of these events, Northumberland, possibly desiring to salvage Knox's reputation and influence, offered him the vacant Bishopric of Rochester. This position Knox turned down. Months later Northumberland tried again to find a post for him, this time as a preacher in London at All Hallows. Knox refused this post as well. Both of these postings would have given Knox a significant role in the episcopal hierarchy with the possibility of further movement. His refusal to take these posts caused confusion among the Council and raised questions about his nonconformity; he was subsequently called before them. The Council wished to determine his reasoning for turning down these posts and if he was willing any longer to officially serve the church. They also pressed him on the point of kneeling at the Lord's Supper, now a more

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<sup>51</sup> Lorimer, 261.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

contentious issue since it was now official policy, to which he had given assent. On this occasion, Knox excised a defter touch and did not answer the questions as directly as the Council might have hoped. He claimed he was of more use outside of London and that this had been allowed by Northumberland. As to the matter of the second question, he turned to another issue of debate, but one that was not yet decided, regarding how a pastor should be allowed to exercise excommunication. On this topic Knox argued that no minister could truly administer his role without this power. Knox was touching on another controversial subject but one on which the Council was not agreed and therefore was able to sidestep the real question posed.<sup>53</sup> On the subject of kneeling, he reiterated his same argument, that he followed the example of Christ. Here Knox and the Council met at an impasse with neither willing to concede to the other side but also neither willing to condemn the other. Knox left the Council after receiving “gentle speeches” to continue his somewhat itinerant ministry.<sup>54</sup>

Following these events Knox seems a little unsure of his role in England and how he can effect change in her Church. He was not alone in his feeling of frustration with the reform happening in England and he was joined by other like-minded preachers during the Lenten season of 1553 to admonish those at court. Knox used another opportunity to preach before Edward VI, what would be his last, to warn of the danger of corrupt advisors. It was clear that Knox felt it was the case that the government and the program of reform were being hampered by “ungodly concillors.”<sup>55</sup> While Knox may

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<sup>53</sup> Dawson, *John Knox*, 75.

<sup>54</sup> Lormier, 175.

<sup>55</sup> Lormier, 173. Knox is recorded saying, “Was David... and Hezekias, princes of great and godly gifts and experience, abused by crafty councilors and dissembling hypocrites? What wonder is it, then, that

have been unsure of how he could fit into an official role in the Church of England, he grew more confident in his assertion that reform must be pushed through more rapidly and compromise for political purposes should not be tolerated.<sup>56</sup> This period did not last long, however, and the death of Edward VI that summer and the failure to install Lady Jane Grey as Queen meant that England would soon be drastically changing. Knox managed to avoid immediate attention from the new government as he had been in Buckinghamshire when these events transpired. Knox soon found himself back in exile, first on the run in England and later on the Continent. During this time he continued to reflect on his time in England and the reform that took place there.

### **Knox the Lord's Supper and Reform**

James McEwen has argued that while Knox held a reformed view of the sacrament, he differed from the other reformers in his understanding of its role in the church. McEwen notes that while the majority of reformers believed that a church must first be firmly established before the sacrament is performed, on many occasions Knox administered the sacrament before, or possibly as a means to, establishing a local church. McEwen concludes that for Knox the Lord's Supper "had an importance and a vital quality" beyond that of other reformers.<sup>57</sup> Other scholars have called into question his

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a young and innocent King be deceived by crafty, covetous, wicked, and ungodly councilors! I am greatly afraid that Achitophel be councilor, that Judas bear the purse, and that Shebna be scribe, comptroller, and treasurer."

<sup>56</sup> Dawson, *John Knox*, 79.

<sup>57</sup> James S. McEwen, *The Faith of John Knox* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1961), 56.

claim, suggesting that the churches in which Knox administered the sacrament had already received preaching and therefore can be understood as established in a sense.<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, given the importance Knox gives to the preached word, it is difficult to see how he would think of a church existing without it. However, it does seem true that the importance Knox places on the Lord's Supper cannot be mistaken.

As we have seen, Knox's exact theological persuasion is difficult to pin down other than that he held a broad Reformed view. His views on practice become much clearer. While he certainly held theological opinions and believed that refuting the doctrine of transubstantiation was vital, Knox's concern in reform was for Scripture and the practices as instituted by Jesus Christ himself be followed and not added to. The Lord's Supper then became, for Knox, a useful rubric for the development of this goal. In Knox's mind, the practice of the Lord's Supper was clearly instituted by Christ during the Last Supper with his disciples. By adding to this practice, the Catholic Church had erred grievously and turned it into an idolatrous ceremony. The purity of the Reformed practice reinstituted the original intent of Christ; anything short of this retained a trace of the idolatry found in the Mass and represented a Church which was not fully reformed.

As mentioned, the importance of, and debate surrounding, the Lord's Supper was not unique, and in fact, a substantial part of the debates during the Reformation are connected to this sacrament—both between Protestants and Catholics and between reformers who held different views. England was in a unique situation, however. It had broken from Rome under the direction of Henry VIII, but since then, reform along the

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<sup>58</sup> Richard G. Kyle, *God's Watchman*, 136. W. Stanford Reid, *Trumpeter of God: A Biography of John Knox* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974), 51.

lines occurring on the Continent was not the priority. At all times, especially in the years soon after Henry's death, a desire for unity and conformity was held high. This approach was less familiar to Knox who preferred to see things in black and white terms; this led to his unease at the end of Edward's reign. For the most part Knox agreed with the reform that Cranmer was enacting, but he also saw ways in which it should be pushed further. Knox remained somewhat unsure of how to live with this tension for the remainder of his time in England. He began to preach in a bolder tone near the end of his time there and refused esteemed positions in the Church's hierarchy; however, he remained employed as a king's chaplain and thereby implying consent to the official practices of the Church. Ultimately, Knox would find surer footing following Edward's death as Mary returned the English Church to the Catholic Mass.

### **Conclusion**

Knox entered England a new preacher and pastor who had had little opportunity to put his evangelical beliefs into practice. His time in England allowed him to first grow comfortable in his pastoral role in Northern England before gaining experience at the national level where he came into contact with men much more experienced and informed than himself. It was a time of immense growth and self-discovery for Knox, but also one in which he was forced to take sides and began to firm his beliefs. While he came to England with many strong opinions, these were put to the test for the first time. Knox's was tested in how far he would follow his convictions in a nation that was

reforming, but not always doing so to his liking. During this time he slowly began to become more convinced of his more radical approach to reform, a conclusion he would reach fully soon after his departure from England.

The initial results of his time in England can be seen in the boldness of his preaching at the end of his time there and the confident manner with which he addressed them in his exilic letters. However, some things were left unsettled in his mind and would not gain their full expression until a year later when he saw the full effects of what he came to believe was a failure on the reformers' part, which led to God's judgement and required man's actions.

### CHAPTER III: *A Godly Warning*

The period immediately following Edward VI's death was an uncertain time for Knox as it was for all evangelicals in England. Knox soon found himself an exile a second time. Removed from his beloved flock, he turned to his pen to express his pastoral insights to those remaining in England. Initially, the letters Knox wrote focused on providing pastoral comfort to those now living in a land where they would likely soon be oppressed and maybe even put to death. However, Knox also felt the need to warn his former congregations about the dangers of conformity to Catholicism, and particularly to the Mass. He addressed this topic in his lengthy letter, *A Godly Letter of Warning, or Admonition to the Faithful in London, Newcastle, and Berwick*. In this letter, he moved from the comforting and advising pastor to take on the mantle of a prophet, warning his followers to abstain from idolatry or suffer the consequences. In this second exilic period, Knox was not passive toward the events happening back in England but instead felt that his time there, and role there as pastor, had given him not only the right but the responsibility to be involved in the continuing affairs in England. In these letters, Knox shows through his writing the pastor and preacher he had become while in England and, in *A Godly Letter*, his development into the prophetic office which signals his evolution as a reformer.

### **The Beginning of Mary's Reign**

Knox did not immediately flee the country following the death of Edward VI or the failure of Northumberland to install Lady Jane Grey as monarch but soon found himself in a difficult position. Mary soon made a proclamation in which she stated that while she remained a Catholic she would not force her subjects to become so (this would soon change). However, she added a condemnation of those causing trouble and spoke forcefully against Catholics, and this certainly included Knox. All preachers now had to be licensed by her government, and foreigners who had come as refugees during Edward VI's reign were encouraged to leave. Knox was conflicted about his own course of action. While he was encouraged by his friends to leave, he still felt a responsibility to England and most of all to the woman he had become betrothed to, Marjorie, and her mother, Elizabeth Bowes, who was one of his most dedicated followers. This matter was complicated by the fact that Marjorie's father and brother, once open to the marriage, now did not want to see her married off to a former priest with suspect fortunes. While they had supported Edward VI, under Mary's reign they were attempting to avoid punishment for doing so and threw their support behind Mary and followed her policies; Knox now represented a liability for them. Additionally, while Knox would have been allowed free passage out of England, this courtesy likely would not have extended to Marjorie since Mary's government would not have recognized her marriage to a former priest like Knox. Following Mary's proclamation, Knox remained in England, on the run, moving from town to town until early in the new year when, after seeing that he would be unable to bring Marjorie and her mother with him, he escaped to France.

During his time on the run in England, Knox was no longer allowed to freely preach but took up his pen to write to his correspondents, Mrs. Bowes most of all, and his former congregations. This began a time of greater than regular literary output by Knox. As Knox would later state, he did not write long treatises expounding the Scriptures, as he saw himself “rather cald of my God to instruct the ignorant, comfort the sorowfull, confirme the weake, and rebuke the proud, by tong and livelye voice.”<sup>1</sup> Additionally, Scotland at this time was a mostly non-literate culture and the spoken word had a power that the written did not.<sup>2</sup> As a result, Knox left few biblical or theological treatises; however, during this time of physical separation from his followers, he turned his sermons into letters so that he could still serve the role of preacher and pastor. While the majority of Knox’s letters were written to address a specific time and issue and therefore do not bear the marks of careful planning, his writing demonstrates his fine oratory style. He is not a concise writer, however, nor was he a concise speaker, but his arguments are clearly developed and these letters give greater insights into the workings of his mind as well as the manner in which he likely spoke publicly.<sup>3</sup>

These early letters, which he wrote or at least began in England, focused on comforting and encouraging those who remained in England and now saw the real possibility of persecution and even martyrdom ahead. Knox’s pastoral abilities came to the fore in these letters. Knox remained mindful of the congregations which had been

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<sup>1</sup> Knox, *Works*, 4:229.

<sup>2</sup> Dawson, *John Knox*, 18.

<sup>3</sup> David D. Murison, “Knox the Writer” in *John Knox: A Quatercentenary Reappraisal* ed. Duncan Shaw (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1975), 33, 39. On his oratory Dawson remarks that he “suffered from the orator’s failing that he found it difficult to stop speaking because he relished the sound of words in his ears and words on his tongue.” (18)

placed under his care during his time in England, while there he had also established a rather large network of correspondents to whom he wrote and offered pastoral wisdom, women figured prominently in this latter group. Throughout his life Knox maintained a special pastoral connection with women. This connection seems to have begun while he was in England and likely shaped his pastoral ministry there and afterward. As Jane Dawson cheerfully notes, concluding on his time in England, “He[Knox] had discovered women and they had discovered him and, predictably, things were never the same again.”<sup>4</sup> These relationships and the pastoral counsel which Knox gave show a tender caring side not always readily associated with the Scottish Reformer. During his time in England he had an especially close relationship with his future mother-in-law, Elizabeth Bowes. The two wrote to each other often, although only Knox’s correspondences have been preserved. Later Knox reflected on their relationship, writing that while her company “was comfortable” that “it was not without some croce: for besides trouble and fasherie<sup>5</sup> of body susteyned for her, my mynde was seldome quyet.”<sup>6</sup> It is possible this connection the two had, and why her troubles so occupied Knox, was that in her Knox found a heart similarly afflicted. On one occasion Knox wrote to Mrs. Bowes following a time when he had expressed shock at her words, he wrote to assure her that his reaction was not due to being shocked at her confession of sin but rather that he was surprised to hear his own struggles reflected in hers. As he wrote, “standing at the copbourn in

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<sup>4</sup> Dawson, *John Knox*, 70.

<sup>5</sup> Fasherie is an expressive Scots word which is similar to annoyance. See *Dictionary of the Scots Language* [www.dsl.ac.uk](http://www.dsl.ac.uk).

<sup>6</sup> Knox, *Works*, 6:514.

Anwik: in verie deid I thought na creature had bene temptit as I wes.”<sup>7</sup> Mrs. Bowes had likely been one of the first women of rank to harbor evangelical leanings in her area and therefore in great need of spiritual advice and direction. Additionally, she seems to have been plagued with doubts regarding her standing before God; it is possibly regarding this topic that Knox is referring to in regards to the “cupboard in Anwik.”<sup>8</sup> Their close connection and Knox’s pastoral manner can be seen in Knox’s letters to Mrs. Bowes. Patrick Collinson notes that in these letters Knox does not assume a forceful masculine authority but instead expressed empathy for her consequences and even confessed that he shared in some of her problems as was just alluded to.<sup>9</sup> Knox wrote to Mrs. Bowes often and on a wide range of topics including discussions on specific biblical passages. The lengthiest of these was his, *An Exposition upon the Sixth Psalm of David*, which Mrs. Bowes had requested he write for her. He wrote a section of it while still in England, which he sent to her, then followed up with the completed version once he arrived in France. This psalm, in which David bemoans the weight of his great sin, seems to have been especially significant to Mrs. Bowes due to her own struggle to overcome the weight of her sin on her conscience. On this occasion, Knox also uses this passage to comment on current circumstances, encouraging Mrs. Bowes to learn from David, and also from Job, that God is always sovereign in prosperity and adversity. But that she

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<sup>7</sup> Knox, *Works*, 3:350. This instance has at times been used as evidence that Knox and Elizabeth shared a more intimate relationship or that in this instance she had made an advance on him. However, as Dawson explains the explanation given above is more likely. While the reference to a cupboard may give the impression of a secluded location Dawson explains that the sixteenth-century cupboard was not a closet or enclosed space but an open dresser on which house owners displayed their best tableware. Dawson, *John Knox*, 68.

<sup>8</sup> Patrick Collinson, “John Knox, the Church of England and the Women of England,” in *John Knox and the British Reformations* ed. Roger A. Mason (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1998), 81.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

should also find comfort and a model in David who despite his great sin still approaches God in prayer due to God's great mercy.<sup>10</sup> He ends specifically addressing the situation in England, now writing after having fled to France. He encourages Mrs. Bowes to maintain that which had been taught to her and not to give in to the idolatry of the "Romish Mass". Knox appears to be particularly downcast writing this letter to his close friend and would-be mother-in-law. He adds that he wonders "yf ever we sall meit in this corporall lyfe."<sup>11</sup> Knox was clearly overwhelmed by the current circumstances and interpreted them in a dire, possibly even apocalyptic manner. This attitude would influence his future letters as well.<sup>12</sup>

At this time Knox was also aware of his wider congregation and their situation remained heavily on his mind. In response to their predicament Knox wrote, *A Declaration of the True Nature and Object of Prayer* which represents him at his pastoral best. Knox is well aware of the mindset of the people he is writing to, but encourages them to trust in God and go to him in prayer during these times. This letter is focused on the practical, Knox lists out ways in which the believer should approach prayer so that he or she is able to have perfect prayer. Knox instructs his readers to be mindful of Satan and worldly distractions but to free themselves from them by focusing on Christ as their mediator. Knox does add a few polemic lines in this letter to ridicule the Catholic

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<sup>10</sup> Knox, *Works*, 3:119-156. Kyle and Johnson, 67-8.

<sup>11</sup> Knox, *Works*, 3:153.

<sup>12</sup> In general, Knox is unspecific about the time and type of punishment God is going to bring, so he does not clearly state that he believes an end for either the world or England is coming. However, his writings at this time do show an apocalyptic mood and, as his later writings show, he believed that significant forces would soon be at play. What this meant for his own life, or those of his loved ones, he seems less sure of.

approach to prayer through the saints, however, he writes that he does so out of a concern that his readers focus on Christ alone as mediator. He writes mockingly, “As thocht that Jesus Chryst had bene but one hour our Mediatour, and efter had resignit the office unto his servandis!”<sup>13</sup> While Knox makes a brief mention of the failings of England and its coming judgment, which has already begun, his focus throughout the letter is pastoral. He encourages his readers to pray and to remain in their faith and adds some practical instruction on private and corporate prayer. He ends by directing their attention to the glory to come in God’s Kingdom. This was a theme he would continue in later writings, that the trials of this life are temporary, and the glory in the life to come is eternal.<sup>14</sup>

During his time in England Knox was given the opportunity to give full expression to his abilities as a preacher, as was noted in the previous chapter. Throughout this time, Knox also developed his pastoral abilities as he shepherded his flock there. These more tender and caring tendencies become clear in the letters he wrote to individuals but also ones such as *A Declaration of the True Nature and Object of Prayer* which he addressed to all those under his pastoral care. Knox’s care for his congregations back in England can especially be seen in the early days of Mary’s reign when he is deeply concerned about the condition of the English nation. Knox appears conflicted about leaving England but is able to remain a part of the lives of his followers there through his letters. During this time his greatest concern is that now England has fallen back into its idolatrous ways that those who had come to an evangelical faith do

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<sup>13</sup> Knox, *Works*, 3:96.

<sup>14</sup> Knox, *Works*, 3:88-105. Richard G. Kyle and Dale W. Johnson, *John Knox: An Introduction to His Life and Works* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009), 54-5.

not now fall back into sin. To further address this concern Knox moves beyond the pastoral and takes on the role of the prophet.

### *A Godly Warning*

As mentioned above,<sup>15</sup> the religious culture in England following Mary's ascension to the throne was tense. Many welcomed the return to the Catholic ceremonies which Mary ushered back in and many, like the Bowes family, returned to them out of convenience. However, those who had embraced the evangelical gospel during Edward's reign were faced with a difficult decision: either return to the Mass and participate in body but not spirit (those who took this option were often referred to as Nicodemites<sup>16</sup>), or they could abstain from the Mass and all Catholic ceremonies and in so doing disobey their monarch, an act many of them would have believed was prohibited by the Bible, and risk persecution. It was to address these concerns that Knox wrote his prophetic letter *A Godly Warning*.

Knox first began to write *A Godly Warning* while he was still in England and finished it soon after he arrived in France. Knox felt compelled to write this letter based on his understanding that the Catholic Mass was idolatry and therefore those who participated in the Mass were guilty of that sin as well. This was not a matter Knox could

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<sup>15</sup> Chapter 1.

<sup>16</sup> A reference to Nicodemus the Pharisee who met with Jesus under the cover of night and then appeared to be a follower of his but kept his beliefs to himself so that he could retain his position as a Pharisee. In general this position were condemned by the Reformation leaders.

be indifferent about, especially since he believed that to be silent on the matter would make him complicit in their sin. Knox's direct correlation between the Mass and idolatry allowed him to directly apply prophetic admonitions from the Old Testament in which the prophets condemned worship to Ba'al and other pagan gods. Therefore, while Knox is especially concerned about the members of the specific congregations where he ministered, he approaches England as a whole nation that has broken her covenant with God and, as such, all members of that nation corporately share in the responsibility for its sin.<sup>17</sup>

As with a sermon, Knox centers his argument around a biblical text. In this case, the biblical characters are Josiah, representing Edward VI—a connection that Cranmer had previously made—and Jeremiah, the prophetic role which Knox attaches himself to. In the biblical account Knox focuses on the period following Josiah's death in which the people of Judea were judged for failing to pursue the purity of worship that began at the beginning of Josiah's reign. Under the reign of Josiah's son Jehoiakim the people returned to worshipping foreign idols. For this Jeremiah condemned Jehoiakim and Judea was soon conquered and eventually taken into exile by the Babylonians, a sign of God's judgment on them. The biblical story of young King Josiah seems to fit Knox's narrative perfectly and Knox is not afraid to make direct connections between Old Testament figures and his contemporaries. The downfall of Judea, he argues, happened because Josiah was sidetracked by wicked counselors and false prophets, despite his godly intentions. Knox had already made a similar claim regarding Edward's council and now

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<sup>17</sup> Richard Kyle, *God's Watchman: John Knox's Faith and Vocation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2014), 218.

named its members explicitly as Stephen Gardiner Bishop of Winchester, Tonstall Bishop of Durham, and Bonner Bishop of London.<sup>18</sup> However, the people are not innocent, Knox believes he did his job in proclaiming the true gospel, “that we had not Godis Word trewlie preachit amangis us, will none, except ane efferent and dispytfull Papist, deny. We had ane King of sa godlie dispositioun towardis vertew and the treuth of God, that none from the begynning passit him.”<sup>19</sup> Knox claims that what he is now writing is no different from what he preached while in England. He references the “Swieitting seikness” which came to the northern counties where Knox was ministering in 1551. At that time Knox had also used the plague to show the people their need to give up sin and idolatry.<sup>20</sup> He also mentions his denunciation of the Duke of Northumberland when he arrested and then executed the Duke of Somerset.<sup>21</sup> While Knox argues he is being constant in his approach and continues to make the argument that England is suffering, now greater than before, due to their sin and lack of reform he clearly makes a dramatic statement when he implies that Edward VI’s death was an act of God’s judgment. Knox believes that this action on God’s part is exactly paralleled in Judea as well, he writes, “in the Lordis anger, he tuke away King Josias.”<sup>22</sup> He then addresses England regarding their own post-Josiah time when, as with Judea, their sin has grown more severe.

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 180. As mentioned Gardiner spent most of Edward’s reign in prison, however, it seems that Knox felt that he still had some influence at least over the people.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 175.

<sup>20</sup> Ridley, 103.

<sup>21</sup> Knox, *Works*, 3:167.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 178.

Knox gives his claim to authority by making direct connections between the present situation in England and that of Israel. Here Knox clearly takes up the prophecy mantle. He defends his right to do so stating that his “assurances are not the Mervallis of Merlin, nor yit the dark senences of prophane Propheis.”<sup>23</sup> Instead, he is reliant on the Word of God in Scripture which is true. He believes that he can take these two together and claim that those punishments God distributed in the Scriptures can be expected in his own time when the actions of men are the same: “Godis Word threatneth distructioun to all inobedient; his immutabill justice must requyre the same.”<sup>24</sup> Knox’s prophetic statements are made credible, he believes, due to his belief in the immutability of God and the truth of his Word in the Scriptures. If God does not change and the accounts of his acts in the Bible are true, then Knox would argue that God can be expected to act in the same way in the present as he has in the past. This conviction paired with his understanding of the Mass as idolatry, as we have already noted, allows him to address England in a prophetic tone and directly relates the experiences of ancient Israel to England’s own present circumstances.

Knox likens England to Judea in its last days before being taken into captivity. He argues that any “indifferent man” would agree that the similarities between Judea before the fall of Jerusalem and England in his own day are striking, with the only clear difference being that Judea had a king and England a queen. In fact, Knox goes further in his condemnation of England and suggests that the situation in England is likely worse than it was in ancient Judea. He writes that while after Josiah had died idolatry arose

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 168.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 168-9.

again in Judea, “But more abominabill idolatrie was never in the earth, than is that whilk of lait is now set up againe be your pestilent Papistis amang yow.”<sup>25</sup> Given this situation he asks, “sall we think that the Lordis vengeance sall sleip, mannis iniquitie being so rype?”<sup>26</sup> His answer, of course, is no. Knox goes on to again assert his belief that God is going to deal with England corporately as a nation that had committed herself in league and covenant to him just as Judea had. He writes,

First, it is to be observit, that Godis Justie being infinit and immutabill, requireth lyke obediene in matteris of religioun of all thame that be within his league, in all ageis, that He requyris of any one natioun, or of any particular man in any age befor us. For all that be in this league ar one bodie, as Moses doth witness, recompting men, wemen, children, servandis, princes, preastis, reularis, officeris, and strangeris within the Covenant of the Lord: Then plaine it is, that of one bodie thair must be one law; sa that whatever God requyreth of one in that behalf he requyreis the same of all.<sup>27</sup>

After making the corporate sin of the people clear, Knox makes clear that all will fall victim to God’s judgment, just as those in Judea who did not give into idolatry were also taken into exile. Knox further believes that the evidence of God’s actions and his intolerance of idolatry mean that his wrath will be coming soon.

Knox then turns to advising his readers on what they are to do until God acts. He first raises the question of taking up arms against the idolaters. This seems to be a logical progression from his arguments concerning corporate sin and God’s hatred for idolatry. However his answer to that question is no, saying that this task should be left up to the Civil Magistrate. Here Knox appears to be taking a passive approach to resistance, but it is worth noting that the term Knox uses is ambiguous. Richard G. Kyle notes that

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 187.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 188.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 191.

different scholars have come to different conclusions regarding what Knox meant, their conclusions helpfully supporting their own theory of Knox's development of resistance. Burns, who places the date for Knox becoming more radical in his resistance theory later, in 1558, claims that this term should be applied solely to the monarch. Greeves, who argues that Knox's theory does not change after his entrance to St. Andrews, suggests that the term can be applied widely and is only disallowing a popular revolt or individual vigilantism.<sup>28</sup> It seems that Burns' application of the term is too narrow. Greeves' argument seems likely to be closer to Knox's intention, however, his exact meaning remains vague, possibly intentionally so. The only clear indication that this statement gives is that Knox believes that if there should be any offense it should happen in an ordered manner in keeping with secular authority, clearly he is preaching against anarchy and vigilantism. More extreme actions were clearly on Knox's mind at this point. Scholars have noted that in the original letter, which was sent to England, he wrote, "Lat a thing be heir notit, that the Prophetis of God sumtymes may teache treasone aganis Kings, and yit neither he, nor sic as obeyis the word spokin in the Lordis name be him, offendis God."<sup>29</sup> This sentence appears to have been removed before the printed version was made. It also does not appear to be connected with any suggestion of treason by Knox, but clearly his mind has begun to move in that direction although at this point he seems unsure of how far to push this conclusion or if he should act on it.<sup>30</sup> Instead, Knox

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<sup>28</sup> Kyle, *God's Watchman*, 219. Cf. J.H. Burns, "John Knox and Revolution, 1558" in *History Today* vol. 8 issue 8 (August 1958), accessed online April 11, 2017 <http://www.historytoday.com/jh-burns/john-knox-and-revolution-1558>. ; Richard L. Greaves, *Theology & Revolution in the Scottish Reformation* (Grand Rapids: Christian University Press, 1980), 117.

<sup>29</sup> Quoted in: Reid, *Trumpeter of God*, 116

<sup>30</sup> Ryan M. Reeves, *English Evangelicals and Tudor Obedience, c. 1527-1570* (Boston: Brill, 2014), 138; Reid, 116; Ridley, 177-8.

asks his followers to remain faithful. They should abstain from the Mass and can even serve as witnesses to others, just as Shadrach, Meshack, Abednego, and Daniel did in the midst of the idolatry of Babylon.<sup>31</sup> At this time obedience to God and abstinence from the Mass is all that Knox commands; openly speaking out against the Mass is not required. Knox spends the rest of his letter encouraging and exhorting his former congregants to follow his advice. He adds that, while they may be swayed by earthly cares, they should have eternity in mind, and brief suffering here on earth pales in comparison to the torment that would await them in hell if they should give in to idolatry. Knox balances these harsher appeals with words of encouragement and comfort and ends focusing his readers' attention on their true comfort in Jesus Christ, who has already won them the victory by which they are redeemed.

### **Knox the Prophet**

The emergence of Knox the prophet helps to show his formation as a reformer. Knox had never shied away from his prophetic vocation, however, it was not until this point that he gave such a bold and comprehensive demonstration of it. The situation in England, Knox believed, called for such a proclamation. The matter was made simpler for him now that he was removed from the country and since England was reverting to Catholicism which he viewed as sinful and idolatrous. This gave Knox the opportunity to speak in stark terms and find for himself ready parallels in the Old Testament. The

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<sup>31</sup> Knox, *Works* vol. III, 201-2.

opportunity to write a letter, which could be published and distrusted, also gave him an opportunity for his prophetic message to have a wide impact.

Knox had already put into practice what he had learned from George Wishart at times throughout his career. Several of these instances have already been noted. The significance of these is that Knox could perceive that his prophecies had come true. In the castle at St. Andrews he had prophesied that they would not be rescued by the English but instead taken away to a “strange country.” This was fulfilled when Knox and other Castilians were enslaved aboard a French galley and also forced to work at times in France. There could be no empirical proof to connect the plague in England during Edward VI’s reign to England’s lack of reform, however, it suited Knox’s narrative. More recently he had been proven right again. He had preached against the Duke of Somerset’s arrest and subsequent exaction under the authority of Northumberland and had then said that Northumberland would be held accountable.<sup>32</sup> Only shortly before Knox wrote *A Godly Warning* Northumberland had been executed by Mary’s government for the role he played in attempting to establish Lady Jane Gray as monarch.<sup>33</sup> These instances surely confirmed to Knox his prophetic abilities. Now he stepped out on a grander scale to consider the entire nation of England in a more systematic way and address the situation in the style of an Old Testament prophet through the medium of a prophetic letter.

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<sup>32</sup> Cf. Knox, *Works* vol. III, 277-78.

<sup>33</sup> Dale W. Johnson and James Edward McGoldrick, “Prophet in Scotland: The Self Image of John Knox,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 33, no. 1 (1998): 80.

While Knox had become assured of his prophetic calling and his responsibility to execute it he did not take this approach out of an overblown sense of self, but rather with their own inadequacies well in mind. By using biblical accounts and by taking on the mantle of a prophet like Jeremiah, Knox believes that he is giving himself a legitimacy that he does not have on his own. Throughout the course of the letter, Knox is able to be both Jeremiah and himself, claiming both the authority of the great prophet and his own intimate knowledge of the situation.<sup>34</sup> Knox's embodiment of Jeremiah also allows him to address England on a national level. Knox understood England as a nation which had made a covenant with God under the reign of Edward VI and was now breaking it. This helps him to equate England and Judea and also allows him to take on the prophetic pose of Jerimiah.<sup>35</sup>

Knox was not unique when he wrote in this manner. Other reformers had already embraced a prophetic identity. While most reformers believed in a closed cannon and the cessation of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, they also understood that God worked through them and their preaching in a prophetic manner.<sup>36</sup> Knox was also far from unique in his own immediate context. Writing on prophecy during the Marian exile, Paul Little has noted that Knox found a home within the radical wing of the Edwardian reformation and that his language is similar to, maybe even inspired by, others he met

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<sup>34</sup> Rudolph P. Almasy, "John Knox and *A Godly Letter*: Fashioning and refashioning the exilic 'I'" in *Literature and the Scottish Reformation*, ed. Crawford Gribben and David George Mullan (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2009), 100.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 101.

<sup>36</sup> Richard Kyle, *The Ministry of John Knox: Pastor, Preacher, and Prophet* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2002), 99. Kyle notes that both Zwingli and Calvin saw preaching as a prophetic act.

there. Little notes that many of these preachers took on the “role and rhetoric of Old Testament prophets.”<sup>37</sup> They, like Knox, saw themselves as spiritual watchmen over England. This role required them to speak at times in dramatic and harsh terms, but, they believed, the times warranted it. The language of another exile, John Ponet, is strikingly similar to Knox’s. Ponet’s argument itself shows similarities as well as differences with Knox’s. Ponet shares Knox’s belief that events in the Old Testament can be directly applied to his current circumstances. Moving further than Knox would, Ponet uses the biblical account of the revolt against the evil Queen Athalia in II Kings 11 to suggest that wicked and idolatrous rulers should not be tolerated.<sup>38</sup> Later, Knox would also find a close friend in his co-minster in Geneva, John Goodman, who found it fitting to write in a prophetic tone back to England. Notably, he also was more radical in his theories than Knox.<sup>39</sup>

Michael Walzer makes a similar argument in his study of the Marian exiles, *The Revolution of the Saints*. He argues that exiles who had previously held positions of influence in England were now left without any official position in that Church. Therefore, Walzer writes, they created a new office for themselves, that of divine prophecy.<sup>40</sup> Dale Johnson has suggested that Walzer’s depiction of Knox as the

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<sup>37</sup> Paul M. Little, “John Knox and English Social Prophecy,” *The Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society of England* 14, no. 3 (May, 1970): 119.

<sup>38</sup> John Ponet, *A Short Treatise on Political Power*, ed. Patrick S. Poole, “Constitution Society” <http://www.constitution.org/cmt/ponet/polpower.htm>, accessed April 4, 2017.; Little, 122.

<sup>39</sup> For a full discussion on Knox and Goodman’s prophetic writings see Jane Dawson, “Trumpeting Resistance: Christopher Goodman and John Knox” in *John Knox and the British Reformations* ed. Roger A. Mason (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1998), 131-153.

<sup>40</sup> Michael Walzer, *The Revolution of the Saints: A Study in the Origins of Radical Politics* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1965), 98.

“oppositional man” best explains his prophetic self-image.<sup>41</sup> Knox, however, appears to be ahead of the curve in that he began writing *A Godly Letter* while still in England — although stripped of his ability to preach openly — and finished it in Dieppe, France before he became involved in the exile communities. Although Walzer appears to be more focused on later writings which happened while Knox was in Geneva it appears that he is correct in claiming that the exiles like Knox took up a prophetic mantle to exert an influence they no longer officially had. Walzer also suggests that the Genevan exiles felt more at liberty to write condemning actions which took place, or had taken place, in England since they were now no longer subject to English law. Again, Knox seems to have moved to this position sooner than his colleagues, possibly because he had never fully accepted the English mindset when it came to authority. Walzer suggests that Knox still maintained this obedience by stating that the responsibility for dealing with idolaters fell on the civil magistrates.<sup>42</sup> However, as already noted, this statement of Knox’s appears more to show his concern at that time that his followers adhere to the secular order in their nation and not revert to a mob like revolt. He clearly spoke against the leaders who held positions of authority under Edward VI and even more so now under Mary’s reign. A degree of disobedience is also fundamental to Knox’s main reason for writing; that his readers should not attend the Mass even if ordered to by the government. Knox would soon make his position much clearer as we will see in the following chapter. A useful point to draw from Walzer’s argument, however, is that Knox’s prophetic self-

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<sup>41</sup> Dale Johnson, “Serving Two Masters: John Knox, Scripture and Prophecy” in *Religion and Superstition in Reformation Europe*, ed. Helen Parish and William G. Naphy (New York: Manchester University Press, 2002), 144. Johnson also gives a helpful overview of other explanations of Knox’s prophetic self-image (142-145).

<sup>42</sup> Walzer, 98.

image should be understood in the context of other Marian exiles, and his time in England as a whole. As noted in the previous chapter Knox had found like-minded men in England who supported his more radical attempts at reform, most notably John Hooper and Jan a'Lasco. Richard Greaves suggests that these men may have helped shape some of Knox's ideas including his view of authority. While Hooper's response to Edward VI's death differed dramatically to that of Knox, he advocated that England accept Mary as queen since she was the rightful heir, Knox does seem to have been encouraged in his non-conformist attitude by him. As already noted, this group of reformers had already begun to preach against the English government in the final days of Edward's reign and it seems that Knox's prophetic letter is a continuation of those sermons. Although after the ascension of Mary to the throne he certainly takes a more dramatic view of events. It is difficult to gauge the direct influence of any one person on Knox's prophetic writings. However, it is clear that while in England he became associated with men who thought in a similar vein and after leaving England wrote in a way similar to his fellow exiles. While Knox's prophetic self-identity is manifest in him in unique ways it can also be seen as developing out of the common soil of the Edwardian reformation and the circumstances the Marian exiles underwent following Edward's death. Therefore, by associating himself with the prophet Jeremiah and writing such a bold letter back to those still living in England, he was writing in such a way that would not have been foreign to his recipients.

Knox's prophetic approach was both similar to his fellow exiles and held unique attributes. Similar to others, Knox relied on God's authority when making prophetic statements. On the other hand, some scholars have noted that while Knox

typically grounds his prophetic authority in Scripture, he is at times inconsistent in this regard, these apparent inconsistencies show some of Knox's distinctives in terms of his understanding of the prophetic vocation. Dale W. Johnson and James Edward McGoldrick have noted that Knox is inconsistent in the manner he applies these principles. They have noted that at times Knox goes beyond Scripture and in their opinion "took unwarranted liberties with it."<sup>43</sup> Knox did later imply that his prophetic utterances could also go beyond Scripture, he claimed that, "God hath revealed unto me secretes unknowne to the worlde; and also that he made my tong a trumpet, to forwarne realms and nations."<sup>44</sup> Kyle also notes that Knox was at times inconsistent in the way he used the term Word of God. Kyle writes that while Knox usually associated this title to Scripture, at times he used in in reference to God's power, Christ, and to preaching.<sup>45</sup> Johnson and McGoldrick concede that while Knox seems to move beyond other reformers in his claims of direct revelation, he is ambiguous about it. This ambiguity and the inconsistencies which Kyle notes make it difficult to be certain of Knox's own understanding of his prophetic abilities and what that calling entailed.

A more thorough study of the full range of Knox's prophetic proclamations would go beyond the scope of this work. However, it is clear that while in some cases he was inconstant in his articulation of his prophetic gifts and their limits, he was consistent in his use of his prophetic voice to address sin and idolatry. In the future, Knox would be bolder in his claims of prophecy, even a little inconstant. His claim of personal special

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<sup>43</sup> Johnson and McGoldrick, "Prophet in Scotland," 77.

<sup>44</sup> Knox, *Works*, 6:229.

<sup>45</sup> Kyle, *The Ministry of John Knox*, 105.

revelation goes beyond what other reformers would have claimed for themselves.

However, he believes he is able to due to God's continued action and active Word in the world. Furthermore, he came to believe that God's utmost desire, and his great responsibility, was to bring reform to God's Church. Therefore, he believed that he was consistently revealing the mind of God when he spoke denouncing idolatry or a lack of reform.

### **Conclusion**

Knox came to have a strong personal identification with the role of a prophet. This is an unmistakable element of his identity which almost all scholars who study Knox have noted. This identity clearly has its roots in the influence of George Wishart and likely is also connected to other factors including his call to ministry and his understanding and use of Scripture. While those may provide the basis for his understanding of the prophetic, it appears that his circumstances inspired his actions and his full acceptance of this office. During his time in England, Knox came into contact with men such as a' Lasco and Hooper who helped confirm his beliefs and became associated with Ponet and others who would take up the same prophetic pen in regards to England. These encounters likely had their effect on his development; however, it seems that just as crucial for Knox, and others who wrote in this vein, was their experience of being cast out of England. This experience necessitated that Knox take up the pen and proclaim his message from afar. It seems that the extreme circumstances which he judged England to be in and his feeling of being in exile led Knox, and others, to find the role of the prophet particularly suited for this time.

Knox had emerged from his time in England as a matured reformer who had been given ample opportunity to ply his trade as pastor and preacher and now felt so strongly identified with those roles so that he did not give them up. The circumstances surrounding his new exile also seemed to him dire enough that to fulfill his obligation to his former congregations, and England as a whole, he felt the need to fully take on the prophetic office now as well. Knox emerges from England as the trumpeting Scot, finding for himself a role that would prove to be such an important factor in defining him. The manner in which he would use this office in the future would change as he crafted messages appropriate for the circumstances, but the role of prophet which he now claimed and identified with would not.

#### CHAPTER IV: *A Faithful Admonition*

Knox spent the beginning of his time in exile in Europe restlessly wandering with the situation in England weighing heavily on his mind. On the continent, Knox continued to associate himself with English evangelicals, known as the Marian exiles. His mind was still focused on England, her Church and those whom he had left behind. Knox continued to write back to those he knew in England to encourage them and exhort them to stay the course. Knox's mind was also preoccupied with the state of England's religious affairs. England's return to Catholicism troubled him deeply but he was also becoming convinced of the failure of the reform effort in England that he had been a part of. As Knox learned of the worsening situation in England he once again took up his prophetic pen and wrote *A Faithful Admonition to the Professors of God's Truth in England*. This lengthy treatise represented a development in Knox's thought since he wrote *A Godly Warning*. In *A Faithful Admonition* he appears more certain of what caused the present situation in England and because of this, he is moved to take a more radical approach to reform. The significance of Knox's 1554 writings are often lost since the views he espouses here are not yet as extreme as the arguments he makes in his 1558 letters. Yet, this does not mean that his 1554 writings should be overlooked, rather they should be understood as fundamental to understanding Knox as a thinker and reformer. The focus on the later texts is due to a desire to understand Knox's political theory and

his theory of resistance. However, to better understand Knox's development and the impact that his time in England had on him we have to see him not so much as a political thinker but as a preacher, pastor, and prophet who is focused on the reform of the Church. These 1554 letters, and *A Faithful Admonition*, in particular, demonstrate that Knox's time in England and what he now perceived as the failure of reform there had a great effect on his thinking and determined his approach to reform.

### **Questions asked by a Scotsman**

The first half of 1554 was a time when Knox was free from any immediate responsibilities and he took the opportunity to travel to a number of important Reformation cities including Calvin's Geneva. While this tour fulfilled a wish for Knox, he seems to have also used it as a chance to interview the leaders of the Reformation that he met regarding the issues which plagued his mind. While in *A Godly Letter* Knox had retained the traditional Protestant approach of passive resistance he had demonstrated that he was not content with this approach. His developing thought can be seen in a list of four questions which he brought first to Calvin and then with Calvin's encouragement to Pierre Viret in Lausanne and Bullinger in Zurich. His first question asked whether a king who ascends the throne at a "tender age" is a lawful king and should be followed. This was a clear reference to Edward VI, a reference which all three men likely perceived. Secondly, he asked if a female could claim the divine right to rule as monarch over a nation and if she could transfer that power to her husband; again while she is not named specifically, this is a clear reference to Mary Tudor in England and her likely marriage to Philip of Spain. Third, he asks a two-part question. First, should ungodly rulers be

obeyed when they enforce idolatry. Then secondly, whether it is permissible for “those authroties, who are still in military occupation of towns and fortresses, are permitted to repel this ungodly violence from themselves and their friends.” Finally, he asks, if resistance should occur and the nobility were to rise up against the ungodly monarch to whom “must Godly persons attach themselves?”<sup>1</sup>

Bullinger’s responses are the only ones which were written down, although Calvin gave a summary of his responses in a letter to Bullinger. Knox’s first question was straightforward and both Bullinger and Calvin affirmed that Edward VI was a lawful monarch and Bullinger makes a point of praising the young king. It is possible that the root of this question was whether Edward’s proclamation concerning succession should have been followed but this is not expressed by Knox or directly dealt with by Bullinger. Concerning the second question, in regards to a female ruler, Bullinger is non-committal. He admits that to have a female sovereign is not ideal but adds that there is a biblical precedent for it. Regarding the transfer of power to her husband he says he does not possess the expertise to adequately answer that. Calvin writes that he agrees with Bullinger and notes that to have a female ruler is out of the natural order and therefore shows the judgment of God. At times, as in the case of Deborah in the Old Testament, it is for the good. He also adds that while he does not approve of this type of government he writes that he said “that private personas have no right to do any thing but to deplore it. For a gynaecocracy or female rule badly organized is like a tyranny, and is to be

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<sup>1</sup> Knox, *Works*, 3:221-226. It should be noted that in this document and in Calvin’s letters there is only the mention of a “Scotsman,” Knox is not mentioned by name. This has led to some speculation regarding the identity of this Scotsman, however, today it is nearly universally accepted that Knox is the person in question. The other candidate suggested is usually John Goodman, however this is unlikely not least because he was an Englishman.

tolerated till God sees fit to overthrow it.”<sup>2</sup> Calvin goes on to note in response to the following questions that it is best for believers to exercise passive resistance but not to initiate or support any “tumult...for the sake of religion.”<sup>3</sup> Bullinger’s answers to these questions leave more room to maneuver. He agrees that laws which subvert God’s laws should not be followed. He goes on to say that there could be instances where active resistance could be justified, he notes that there is a precedent for it both in the Bible and Church history; however, he adds that such action would have to be determined on a case by case basis. He answers the final question, regarding the support of such an uprising, in the same way, saying that it would depend on the circumstances, sidestepping the question but also not condemning any such action.<sup>4</sup> There is no record of Viret’s responses to Knox’s questions, however, Richard Greaves suggests that based on Viret’s other writings Knox would have likely received answers which were more political in nature than either Bullinger’s or Calvin’s. Greaves writes that Viret would have likely approved of a resistance to overthrow political as well as religious tyranny. Also, importantly, Viret may have added that magistrates have a duty to depose of rulers who oppose the gospel.<sup>5</sup>

The impact of these men’s views on Knox’s own view is not entirely clear. Calvin appears to be the most conservative and clearly renounced armed resistance

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<sup>2</sup> John Calvin, “CCCXLVIII- To Bullinger April 28, 1554” in *Letters of John Calvin* vol. III, trans. and ed. Jules Bonnet (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1858), 38.

<sup>3</sup> Calvin, “CCCXLVIII- To Bullinger April 28, 1554,” 37-38.

<sup>4</sup> Knox, *Works*, 3:221-226.

<sup>5</sup> Greaves, *Theology & Revolution in the Scottish Reformation*, 133.

against a sovereign. Bullinger seems to have opened the door a bit more for Knox and Viret perhaps encouraged him down a more radical path. Greaves argues that Knox's views never fundamentally depart from that of Calvin and Bullinger, as he claims J.H. Burns has argued, however, he does note elsewhere that Calvin disapproved of Knox and Goodman's 1558 tracts which called for more radical action.<sup>6</sup> Ryan Reeves has noted that in his letter to Calvin on this topic Bullinger also writes that he is sending two Englishmen to him, one of whom was Thomas Lever who opposed active resistance and would soon be an adversary of Knox's in Frankfurt. When Bullinger mentioned that he would defer to those "acquainted with all the circumstances" Reeves suggests that he had Lever in mind.<sup>7</sup> It is less clear if, at this point, Knox would have understood that Bullinger was deferring to Lever. Additionally, Ridley points out that when years later he is asked to defend his views on resistance in Scotland he cites only the *Apology of Magdeburg*.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, while Knox would have given great weight to the opinions of these men and may have interpreted Bullinger's and Viret's answers as some degree of encouragement, it does not appear that the position he formed was inspired by any of these men.

The line of questioning shows that Knox was actively considering the validity of armed resistance in England should it occur and possibly was even considering encouraging it. Knox and the other Reformers were aware of the position they were in.

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<sup>6</sup> Greaves, 129, 131. Cf. Burns, J.H. "Knox and Bullinger." *Scottish Historical Review* 34 (1955): 91.

<sup>7</sup> Reeves, 139-40.

<sup>8</sup> Ridley, 171. This document was drafted by the pastors in Magdeburg in 1550 to justify military resistance to Charles V.

For almost all who had embraced the Reformation teaching a form of passive resistance had already been accepted. For those like Knox who held an understanding of covenanted relationship of nations with God as well as the corporate responsibility for sin the question now became what actions should be taken in nations like England and Scotland where the government enforced a religion which they believed was evil and idolatrous. Knox and others would have also been sensitive to not wanting to be lumped in with the mob like revolts often attributed to Anabaptist sects which were scored by Catholics and Protestants alike. Knox does not appear to have received any clear answers to his questions but for the most part, he did not find that the answers shut any doors for him. Soon, however, events would turn and Knox would take up his prophetic pen again this time with more force and determination to see his view of reform happen.

### *A Faithful Admonition*

Knox returned from his travels to Dieppe to mixed news from England. He was grateful to learn that his advice was being heeded and that there were those who resisted attending the Mass and had formed in groups to support each other. He also would have been pained to have learned about the worsening conditions for evangelicals in England and that many of his fellow churchmen who had remained were now in prison likely awaiting their death.<sup>9</sup> Knox initially responds by writing two “epistles of comfort” to those who remain in England. These letters show little new thought on Knox’s part but rather a reaffirmation of what he had already written and a perceived hope for imminent

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<sup>9</sup> Reid, *Trumpeter of God*, 112.

action on the part of God. Knox's focus in these letters is the deliverance which comes from God and the judgment he will surely pour out on idolaters. However, in his second letter he does add in closing, "For so assuredly as God is immutable, so assuredly shall he styr up one Jehu or other to execute hys vengeaunce upon these bloudde-thyrsty tyrauntes and obstinate idolators."<sup>10</sup> Knox says this to encourage his readers that just as in the Old Testament God will eventually avenge his people. By invoking a hypothetical Jehu, however, Knox does seem to be opening the door further for what could be acceptable actions on the part of those in England. Clearly, the idea of bolder acts which would be deemed treasonous was still on his mind. Just six weeks after these epistles had been sent Knox picked up his pen again and wrote the lengthiest and boldest letter he had yet written, *A Faithful Admonition to the Professors of God's Truth in England*. It seems that part of the reason Knox chose to write this letter now is that he had learned of Mary's intention to marry Philip of Spain, something he had feared might happen, but had believed that it was something she had promised not to do.<sup>11</sup>

As with Knox's other writings, Knox centers his letter around a biblical story. In this letter, he turns to the New Testament and applies the story of Jesus' disciples caught on the sea of Galilee in a storm from Matthew 14 to the situation in England. Knox begins his letter by reaffirming his belief in the sovereignty of God, therefore he writes, it is wrong to ascribe plagues of any nature to luck or misfortune but instead, they imply a need to acknowledge sin. In the body of the letter, he turns to the biblical story. He writes that following the feeding of the 5000 Jesus left the people because they did not

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<sup>10</sup> Knox, *Works*, 3:247.

<sup>11</sup> Knox, *Works*, 3:254.

understand his message but instead were focused on earthly things. Likewise, Jesus temporarily leaves his disciples on the Sea of Galilee by themselves as well since they have failed to realize the significance of what Jesus had just done. When Knox turns to the application of this passage his critique is more wide-ranging than before. While the people of England are still guilty of not recognizing the gospel when it was presented to them, they are the crowds from the story. Knox also laments the actions of the evangelical preachers, while previously he made it clear that they had clearly presented the gospel he now writes, “The Ministers who were the distributours of this bread (the true Worde of God), wherewith the multitude within Englande was fedde, lacked not their offences, which also moved God to sende us to the sea. And because the offences of no man are so manifest unto me as are myne owne, only of my selfe I wyl be the accusoure.”<sup>12</sup> The preachers are the disciples who, although very close to Jesus, nevertheless did not fully grasp his message and now in Knox’s view they did not do enough. “Why helde we backe the salt?” He openly laments claiming that others, and himself most of all, should have been bolder in their confrontation of corruption and evil in England and that he was also guilty of spending too much time in the comfort of friends and in palaces when he should have been reproofing sin, feeding those that were hungry and diligently executing his office. His offenses he believes are worthy of damnation.<sup>13</sup>

Knox steps back to take in the whole of the English Reformation to that time. He is unsurprisingly critical of the work done under Henry VIII and especially of the *Six*

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 268.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 271.

*Articles*. However, he notes that even after Henry's death the Devil was at work. He praises Cranmer for attacking the doctrine of transubstantiation and for taking away the superstitions of the Mass. He does make the note that all superstitions had been removed except kneeling. It may seem odd for Knox to lavish praise on Cranmer who so recently stymied his attempts at further bolder reform—reform that Knox had just been lamenting that he had not achieved. It is possible that Knox was able to put this behind him and recognize the amount of work for reform that Cranmer had accomplished. Additionally, it is likely that aware that Cranmer was now in jail and likely to be martyred, and it would be churlish to defame a man who was suffering a fate he had fled from. Lastly, as Ridley suggests, since he was now writing back to the nation of England as a whole he may have wished to avoid making a statement that would divide evangelicals as opposed to uniting them behind a single purpose as he desired.<sup>14</sup> The problem in England in Knox's view was "that under that innocent King pestilent Papistes had greatest authoritie."<sup>15</sup> He repeated the claims he had made in the last days of Edward VI's reign. Returning to the present day he suggests that England is now like the disciples who are caught in the storm in the middle of the sea. Knox still maintains that God will deliver England, just as Jesus came to the aid of the disciples, but that at times God allows evil to persist so that the full extent of the evil done can be shown and judged. Knox then makes a bold move and focuses his attack directly on Mary. He claims that Mary had promised both to be merciful and that she would not marry a foreigner, two promises he says she has now broken. While Knox rails against all who oppose the evangelical gospel in this

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<sup>14</sup> Ridley, 185.

<sup>15</sup> Knox, *Works*, 3:282-3.

argument he appears to be hoping to make a broader appeal to the English people on the basis of their national pride by claiming that with Mary's marriage to Philip she is handing England over to Spain. This is an especially bold approach by Knox. By making this argument he is clearly arguing that Mary is guilty of treason. Additionally, he attacks the powerful Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, who was the father of Philip, by comparing him to Nero the infamous Roman Emperor who had persecuted the Early Church.<sup>16</sup>

Throughout the letter, Knox moves back and forth between judgment and condemnation and encouragement. In this letter, Knox clearly addresses two groups: the nation of England as a whole, which is guilty of idolatry, and the elect who Knox encourages. He claims that the elect will persevere and that God will deliver them. He returns to the prophet Jeremiah to demonstrate that God's elect must at times act in ways which are not normal. He tells of how, when he knew of the coming destruction of Jerusalem, Jeremiah called for the Godly to abandon the city and preserve their own lives. Knox notes that this command may have seemed strange, even seditious and ungodly, to suggest that the people should abandon their king and that it would be contrary to their own reason to flee from their city and stronghold. But Knox writes that God's elect must follow his Word even when this Word goes "against wordlye appearaunce, against natural affections, and against cyvil statutes and constitutions: as also, that suche as obey Goddes speaking by his messengers, never lacketh juste rewarde and recompensation. For onely suche as obeyed the voice of the Prophete founde favour and grace, to the prayse and glorie of Goddes name, when his juste judgements toke

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 308-9.

vengeance upon the disobedient.”<sup>17</sup> Knox moves to a more comforting tone as he returns to his original story and seems to compare Peter, who walked out on the water to meet Jesus, with the elect in England and also with himself. Peter’s actions encapsulate the lesson that Knox is drawing from the wider context of the story. While Peter starts off well he becomes afraid of the mighty wind and begins to drown. Knox notes that this is his and his audience’s problem as well that they “more consider the daungers and lettes [hindrances] that are in our journey, then we do the almyghtie power of Hym that hath commanded us to come to him self.”<sup>18</sup> In spite of this, there is hope; Knox writes that it is because of this weakness that Peter and themselves are able to see the greatest of God’s mercy and rightly praise him for it. Knox hits here on the reformed principles of man’s depravity and Christ’s sufficiency to justify man by faith alone and makes a point to contrast that with the “papists” who boast in their own strength and free will. Therefore, Knox concludes that these trials are of benefit as they prevent men from becoming arrogant like the “papists.” As he concludes, he continues in a comforting manner, writing that he hopes that even as now England is sinking that she will call out to God and be saved. The situation is dire and Knox reaffirms their own guilt in bringing it about but he hopes still in God’s justice and that England will repent and turn to God.

### **Knox’s Theory of Reform**

As previously mentioned there is some debate regarding the evolution of Knox’s resistance theory and at what point he moved from observing passive disobedience and

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 312-3.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 313.

began to hold a position of active resistance which could endorse at times armed force. The traditional view, as espoused by J.H. Burns and others, focuses on Knox's 1558 treatises as the decisive moment for Knox. Burns argues that while Knox's life had always been intrinsically entwined with politics it was during 1558 when he penned his most extreme and best known treatises, including the infamous *First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*, that he moved to having a political ideology and advocated for the removal of idolatrous monarchs.<sup>19</sup> Richard Greaves has taken another approach. While he acknowledges the importance of the 1558 tracts he argues that Knox's willingness to join the Castilians in St. Andrew who had killed Cardinal Beaton implies that already at that point he approved of their actions. Less attention is given to the 1554 letters that we have examined; however, several authors do note their significance. Burns notes that *A Faithful Admonition* represents the first time Knox resorts "to a purely political argument."<sup>20</sup> Dan G. Danner notes that the 1554 letters first demonstrate Knox's belief that idolatrous rulers could be lawfully overthrown but notes that he does not make it explicit how this could be accomplished.<sup>21</sup> W. Stanford Reid argues that Knox's thought underwent a radical change between the writing of his second "Comfortable Epistle" and *A Faithful Admonition*, writing that "one might even say that his publication of the latter pamphlet represented a turning point in his religio-political

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<sup>19</sup> Burns, "John Knox and Revolution, 1558."

<sup>20</sup> Burns, "John Knox and Revolution, 1558."

<sup>21</sup> Dan G. Danner, "Resistance and the Ungodly Magistrate in the Sixteenth Century: The Marian Exiles" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 49 no. 3 (Sept. 1981): 475-6.

views.”<sup>22</sup> However, the significance of these 1554 writings is best displayed not in terms of political thought but in terms of Knox’s desire to see the Church reformed.

As Richard Kyle has written it is “rather artificial” to see Knox in purely political terms or to try to separate his political and religious views. Fundamentally, Knox was focused on the Church and its reform; his thought when applied to other areas was simply an extension of this.<sup>23</sup> Walzer has made a similar argument noting that for Knox all knowledge was from God, therefore, his political thought was derived not from man-made systems but from Godly principles, found in the Bible primarily in the Old Testament. Therefore, Walzer writes, Knox’s “appeal was always to a special truth; tutored by the Holy Ghost.”<sup>24</sup> In *A Faithful Admonition*, Knox does make a clearly political argument when he accuses Mary of treason. The gravity of this argument could not have been lost on Knox. While he did not share the same sensibilities towards the monarchy that his English colleagues did he would have gained a greater appreciation for the order and hierarchy in English society during his time there. Furthermore, regardless of his sensibilities, it is hard to imagine that he would not have understood that he crossed a line others would not by directly attacking Mary.<sup>25</sup> However, this can be understood as a tactic to his goal of removing Mary and bringing about reform rather than the development of a concise political theory.

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<sup>22</sup> Reid, *Trumpeter of God*, 113.

<sup>23</sup> Kyle, *God’s Watchman*, 207.

<sup>24</sup> Walzer, 101.

<sup>25</sup> Kyle writes that many of the exiles were willing to write against the bishops back in England but not against Mary herself. Ponet was an exception to this. Soon his fellow exiles would use this stance against him at the church in Frankfurt to help convince the local leaders that he was seditious. His attack on Charles V did not help him here either. Walzer, 223; Kyle 207-8.

To understand Knox's development we must first reexamine his time in England, this time focusing on his attitude towards obedience to civil authorities. As mentioned, Greaves begins earlier, arguing that Knox's views on disobedience do not change citing him joining the Castilians in 1547 as an affirmation of their revolt.<sup>26</sup> It seems that Greaves reads too much into this event. While he will later "write merrily" regarding the events in question in his *History* it is harder to judge his mind at that time. Writing about the influences on Knox during his time in St. Andrews' castle, Carol Edington writes that while joining the Castilians shows an acceptance of their actions she is doubtful that this shows "the manifestation of a carefully formulated doctrine of resistance."<sup>27</sup> Edington also argues that the approval Knox shows for the murder of Cardinal Beaton in his *History* is to demonstrate God's judgment on the sinful Cardinal rather than an endorsement of the manner in which it was accomplished.<sup>28</sup> It seems likely that as a known follower of Wishart that Knox felt it was the best and safest course of action for him to join those in St. Andrew's. This was a conclusion he came to only after several months of travel within Scotland and the contemplation of going instead to the continent. During his time in England he wrote a letter to Mrs. Bowes apparently responding to a question she had regarding the slaughter of the men of Shechem in Genesis 34 by the sons of Jacob. Here he condemns their actions and says that he believes they acted unlawfully because they could not be considered civil magistrates.<sup>29</sup> As noted, Knox's

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<sup>26</sup> Greaves, *Theology and Revolution in the Scottish Reformation*, 126-7.

<sup>27</sup> Carol Edington, "John Knox and the Castilians: A Crucible of Reforming Opinion?" in *John Knox and the British Reformations* ed. Roger A. Mason (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1998), 45.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Knox, *History* vol. I, 77-79. Knox, *Works* vol. III, 396. This argument is found in an undated letter to Elizabeth Bowes but it is likely that it can be dated before 1555 when she and her daughter were

use of this term is not entirely clear but it does seem to imply that if action was necessary it should be in accordance with some form of secular order. On a separate occasion, while a prisoner on the French galley, he advised some noblemen who were also prisoners that they should attempt to escape; however, he speculates that it must be done without killing any of their captives.<sup>30</sup> From the ship Knox also wrote a summary of fellow Castilian Henry Balnaves' treatise on justification. In Knox's work, he agrees with and summarizes Balnaves argument. Roger A. Mason has noted that it is possible that Knox is also agreeing with Balnaves Lutheran political view of the two kingdoms. Knox recounts the responsibilities of princes, including knowing and following God's law, and adds that the people should obey their princes "in all things not repugning to the command of God."<sup>31</sup> Mason admits that in this short letter of Knox's there is no definite statement on his position but suggests that at this point Knox may have held to Balnaves' two kingdoms view and seen the role of the prince or monarch as "restoring and preserving the 'true religion'" but not interfering directly with the affairs of an established Church.<sup>32</sup> This treatise suggests that Knox had entertained some political thought by this point, but there does not appear to be any convincing evidence to show that he had conceived of any position of his own other than accepting the fairly standard articulation which Balnaves gave.

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reunited with Knox and came with him to Geneva. While Knox's views changed by the time he was writing his *History* it is possible that as the attack on Cardinal Beaton was led by some Scottish lairds that he considered them to have the authority of a civil magistrate.

<sup>30</sup> Dawson, *John Knox*, 56.

<sup>31</sup> Knox, *Works*, 3:26.

<sup>32</sup> Roger A. Mason, "Knox, Resistance and the Royal Supremacy," in *John Knox and the British Reformations* (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1998), 159-160.

Most scholars agree that Knox adhered to the doctrine of Christian obedience while in England. However, as Greaves notes, this is at least in part because he found little with which to disagree.<sup>33</sup> This is true, at least initially, but as time progresses Knox's views become more ambiguous. Reeves points to Knox's letter to his congregation in Berwick following the debate over kneeling to demonstrate his adherence to the authority of the government.<sup>34</sup> Knox wrote, "Remembring always, beloved bretherne, that dew obedience be given to magistrates reulars and princes, without tumult, grudge or seditioun."<sup>35</sup> However, as we have noted earlier this letter was written with a degree of hesitancy on the part of Knox and while he instructed his congregation to follow the law in respect to kneeling it appears that he did not. This episode isn't mentioned in any of Knox's 1554 letters, but based on his self-deprecation in *A Faithful Admonition* it is evident that he was not satisfied with his actions while in England, particularly during these last few years when he was given a voice at court. Mason notes that following his disagreements with the English authorities, over kneeling at communion and his refusal of a bishopric, "iron entered Knox's soul" and he became more skeptical about the ability of the secular government to advance reform. Mason further suggests that in *A Faithful Admonition* Knox's "distrust of the temporizing world of the politicians (lay and clerical) first becomes fully manifest."<sup>36</sup> However, Mason sees Knox's radicalization happening later through the influence of his exile and suggests there is little other development in his 1554 letters. While Knox's most politically

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<sup>33</sup> Greaves, *Theology & Revolution in the Scottish Reformation*, 127.

<sup>34</sup> Reeves, 134.

<sup>35</sup> Knox, "Epistle to the Congregation of Berwick," 259.

<sup>36</sup> Mason, 164.

forceful and polemic treatises which gave clearer avenues of action came near the end of his exile it is important not to jump from his time in England to then.

Following the “Black Rubric” incident Knox clearly began to feel a discomfort with the pace and direction of reform in England and how whole heartedly he could align himself with it. He began to give voice to his concerns in the last months of Edward’s reign but it appears that his time in exile immediately following Edward’s death allowed him to clarify his thoughts to some extent and take stock of his time in England. It was then, in the first half of 1554 that he became convinced not only of the failure of the English authorities to successfully implement reform but that he had failed in his role in that country as well. An examination of Knox’s two prophetic letters suggests that a shift occurred in his thinking after writing *A Godly Letter*. In this letter Knox’s focus was more on freeing his readers from the responsibility to follow the Queen’s orders. He hoped and believed that judgment would come but was content at this point to leave the matter in God’s hands. His mention of the authority of civil magistrates to act was in keeping with what he wrote to Mrs. Bowes somewhere around this same time, however, rather than an appeal to them it is phrased in a way to discourage his readers from taking up arms in a populous revolt. By the time of his second letter of comfort he was willing to openly speculate about God calling one like Jehu to bring his vengeance. Burns argues that merely wishing an event like this would happen is not the same as the actual organization of it. While he is right, it is also notable that on this occasion Knox does not seek to make any clarification as he does in *A Godly Letter* about who has the authority to carry out such a task. Ridley notes that by writing this he would have been aware that his words could inspire someone back in England to take on that role and he seems at this

point to go beyond his previous restriction that permitted only magistrates to act.<sup>37</sup> By the time Knox penned *A Faithful Admonition* he is convinced that the situation which now has befallen England is a result of the failure of reform during Edward's reign. Knox no longer believed that it was simply a case of a hardhearted people who did not repent soon enough of their ways but that their leaders were just as much if not more to blame, for they had not committed themselves fully to God's word and Knox and the other preachers had "held back the salt" by not pushing reform or purging out wickedness to the extent that was needed. In this letter Knox still does not present any organized plan of revolt or blatantly endorse violence; however he would have understood that he was crossing a line by implying that Mary was guilty of treason, a crime which was punishable by death. Additionally, while he makes an obviously political argument to discredit Mary he seems less concerned about the political implications of Mary's marriage to Philip but rather that this marriage would solidify England as a Catholic nation.

### Conclusion

When examining the progression of Knox's political thought and his views on active resistance the 1558 letters are clearly a watershed moment in Knox. However, as most commentators agree Knox was not a systematic thinker. He did, however, maintain a consistent belief following his time in England that the reform of the church needed to

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<sup>37</sup> Ridley, 182.

be full and to be pursued according to God's will, which Knox believed he understood via God's Word. The development of Knox's thought to this position can be seen following his defeat over kneeling at communion and culminating in *A Faithful Admonition*. While he never wished to abandon the secular political structure but it seems that he began to question its ability to usher in the change he desired. Ultimately political institutions and arguments could be used as means to an end, but they could not fulfill that end in and of themselves. From this point onward Knox placed the reform of God's earthly Church above all else. This position allowed for him to make the political statements he did in 1554, which were radical enough to have him accused of treason, and allowed for his later more radical political statements when he felt the circumstances called for them. For instance before writing his *First Blast Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* Knox had learned of the rapid progress in the negotiations for Mary Queen of Scots to be married to Francis II of France and had also learned of continuing persecution in England.<sup>38</sup> Following Mary Tudor's death and the ascension of Elizabeth I to England's throne, Knox backtracks on his condemnation of female rulers and does not return to it in the proposal he wrote for his *Second Blast*.

Rather than holding a systematic approach to these matters Knox believed that he needed to interpret the Word of God to understand how to respond to each situation. Many times, this meant finding a useful parallel in Scripture that he could apply to the present circumstances and issue his prophetic proclamations. However, he also understood that at times God's Word would contradict what was normally accepted in culture or might even run contrary to man's wisdom as was the case with Jeremiah.

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<sup>38</sup> Burns, "John Knox and Revolution, 1558."

Knox would at times make radical statements and even suggest courses of action which were considered extreme. These statements came as situations around him changed and as he became more comfortable with radical political positions and came to believe that God would permit them. These statements, however, should be seen in the light of his understanding that reform was God's greatest desire and above all it must be accomplished. He had failed to see this through once, in England, and he was determined not to be so hesitant again.

## CHAPTER V: A Reformer Made: Frankfurt and Beyond

Knox would not be involved in reform again on a national scale until his permanent return to Scotland over five years after he left England. His development as a reformer can be seen, however, shortly after he wrote the aforementioned letters during his brief commission as pastor to the English exile church in Frankfurt. During this encounter Knox can be seen as a more convinced and determined man as he begins to put into action the ideas about reform he expressed in his letters. This episode further shows the fruit Knox's time in England bore on his future career.

### The Frankfurt Troubles

Before the end of 1554 Knox was called to the English speaking church in Frankfurt. He reluctantly accepted the call and took over pastoral duties for the newly formed congregation. Upon arrival Knox found himself in the middle of an argument over the use of liturgy. The English exiles who came to Frankfurt had been asked by the city council to observe a liturgy which was in keeping with the French church which was already established there by Valerand Poullain. While diverting from the liturgy of the 1552 *Book of Common Prayer* was not unprecedented for the exiles it seems that the group in Frankfurt, led by William Whittingham, took this as an opportunity to change the book itself. This was seen by some others in the congregation as showing disrespect

to Cranmer and the others who had formed the book and now were suffering in prison back in England. The Frankfurt congregation had also sent out letters to the other exiles encouraging them to join them in Frankfurt. It seems that some of the churches which received this letter misinterpreted it as a request for pastors. The church in Strasbourg responded, however, their suggestion was rejected since Frankfurt had already called several men to serve as their pastor, of whom Knox and Thomas Lever eventually responded positively and came. The Frankfurt church also instituted a church polity which would see their ministers functioning as equals. This also was out of step with the other English churches in exile and the ecclesial form that had been used in England and brought more negative attention to the Frankfurt church. It appears that it was to address these concerns that Richard Cox and others from Strasbourg arrived in Geneva later on.<sup>1</sup>

Knox came to Frankfurt with the sides already drawn within the congregation. Unsurprisingly Knox sided with Whittingham's group who shared Knox's belief that reform in England had not gone far enough.<sup>2</sup> The matter was further complicated when Thomas Lever, who had also been called to serve as pastor, arrived and supported *The Book of Common Prayer* camp. Despite descending into a rather ugly bout of fighting between members of the church a compromise was finally reached in February of the

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<sup>1</sup> While an extensive narrative of the "Troubles in Frankfurt" goes beyond the purpose of this section the account recorded here is mostly inspired by the article "'The 'Troubles' at Frankfurt: a new chronology" by Timothy Duguid which is founded on a number of recently found papers, mostly authored by Christopher Goodman, which Duguid argues sheds new light on these events and their chronology, and Dawson's account in her biography *John Knox* which also draws from these papers. Timothy Duguid, "The 'Troubles' at Frankfurt: a new chronology" in *Reformation & Renaissance Review* 14, no. 2 (2012), 243-268.; Dawson, *John Knox*, 90-108.

<sup>2</sup> Duguid, 247.

following year. A committee, of which both Knox and Lever were members, constructed a new liturgy which both sides could accept.

The peace was short-lived. Shortly after this agreement, a group of exiles from Strasbourg arrived in Frankfurt lead by Richard Cox. Cox held no official position but had previously been Dean of Christ Church Oxford and could lean on his former position and power of personality. His group immediately pushed for a liturgy closer to that of *The Book of Common Prayer*, a move which Lever supported. This resulted in another all-out battle within the church. Knox went on the offensive. In a sermon delivered soon after Cox's arrival Knox demonstrated the uncharitable view of the 1552 *Book of Common Prayer* that he had developed and called it "superstitious, impure, unclean and unperfect."<sup>3</sup> He echoed his remarks in *A Faithful Admonition* suggesting that if the church in Frankfurt did not remove all elements of superstition and idolatry from its worship Germany would suffer the same fate as England, taking the opportunity to again review the faults of the Edwardian Church.<sup>4</sup>

Knox's group would have been supported by the city council who were worried about the English using *The Book of Common Prayer* since this might be seen as an anti-Marian statement which could draw the ire of her nearby father-in-law Charles V.<sup>5</sup> However, Knox and his allies were outmaneuvered by Cox. They used Knox's *A Faithful Admonition* against him to show to the council that Knox had said treasonous

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<sup>3</sup> Dawson, *John Knox*, 101.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Reeves suggests that since Frankfurt had supported Charles V and avoided any negative attention from him they did not want to use *The Book of Common Prayer* which Charles' daughter-in-law (Mary) had outlawed. Reeves 140-1.

things against Mary, and more importantly, against Charles V. Knox was given the opportunity to stay if he accepted the *Prayer Book*, but he responded that “I could wish my name to perish, so that God’s book and his glory might only be sought amongst us.”<sup>6</sup> Soon Knox left Frankfurt being cast into exile a third time.

Knox would soon recover from this unpleasant experience and help lead a vibrant church in Geneva with his like-minded friend Christopher Goodman.<sup>7</sup> But this brief episode shows Knox at odds with other members of the English Church soon after he wrote *A Faithful Admonition*. The extreme views he presented in this letter, as well as his attitude toward *The Book of Common Prayer* led to him being opposed by some of his fellow exiles, while he was embraced by others. Outside of England and with his more determined approach to reform now set Knox demonstrated his uncompromising approach in this encounter. While he suffered a defeat, it was due to his lack of ability as a politician and because of his bold statements and extreme views and therefore it was a defeat that would weigh on him less than the one he believed he suffered in England.

The position Knox took in Frankfurt was predictable based on his previous arguments in which he maintained a reliance on Scripture alone, stating that ceremonies made up by man were unnecessary and most often idolatrous as he had argued in *A Vindication of the Mass* and *A Godly Warning*. The conflict in Frankfurt shows that some within the Marian exiles agreed with Knox and like him had hoped to use the

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<sup>6</sup> Knox, *Works* vol. IV, 46.

<sup>7</sup> Goodman had originally been a member of Cox’s party but was swayed to Knox’s side in part due to his dislike for Cox’s tactics.

opportunity of exile to make further reforms than they could in England. This episode also shows that there were those, even among the Marian exiles, who strongly opposed Knox's interpretation of events and his ideas about reform. This is an attitude which did not change and as Reid W. Stanford argues represents one of the reasons for the differences between the Church of England and the Church of Scotland.<sup>8</sup> Ultimately, this brief period in Knox's life shows the extent he had become convinced that reform needed to be pushed further. Just two years previous he had signed off on *The Book of Common Prayer* and instructed others to follow it. Now he held nothing back in his attacks on it and the problems with English reform which it represented. While his dissatisfaction with it was clear during his time in England he seemed willing to go along with it in hopes for later further reform and so as to avoid schism in the church. At Frankfurt, he abandoned this latter concern and took a clear stance which ended in him leaving the city. Knox believed that by taking such a position they were in danger of enacting idolatrous practices and thereby were once again prone to be victim to God's judgment. The vehemence with which Knox clashed with his fellow evangelicals shows how strongly he now believed in his uncompromising vision of reform.

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<sup>8</sup> W. Stanford Reid, "Knox's Attitude to the English Reformation" in *The Westminster Theological Journal* 26, No. 1 (1963), 1.

## CHAPTER VI: Conclusion

John Knox has rightfully been depicted as the leading reformer in Scotland. This accurately represents the influence he had there and the eventual role he played in the Scottish Reformation. However, this label often obscures the amount of time he spent outside of Scotland at the beginning of his career. The events described in this study are often reviewed in relation to Knox's influence on later Puritan thought. While there is likely a connection between Knox and the later Puritans, focusing on what influence Knox might have had on future English Protestants misses the great impact which Knox's time in England had on him.

The Reformation which occurred in England under Edward VI was unique and ultimately cut short. Cranmer and others pushed the English Church in an evangelical direction but were ever mindful of the convoluted legacy which Henry VIII had left regarding religious reform and of the opposition they would encounter. This led to reform that Knox would see as too tentative and failed to properly root out Catholicism from England. Knox found himself unsure of his place in England following his failure to adequately change the 1552 *Book of Common Prayer* and remove the command to kneel while receiving communion. Following this event he preached conformity to his congregations but began to show signs of his discomfort with the pace of the English Reformation. Accompanied by other like-minded ministers he soon began to preach more adamantly about the need for reform and against the influence of suspected conservative voices in Edward VI's court. This period was brought to a halt by Edward's death.

During Mary's reign Knox fled to the continent but continued the campaign he began in England and wrote a series of letters back to England. To further his assault on the failings of the English Reformation he embraced his prophetic vocation to call the English people to task by equating them with the soon to be exiled Judea of Jeremiah's day in *A Godly Warning*. Soon after writing this treatise, and learning about the worsening situation in England, Knox took a bolder stance in *A Faithful Admonition*. He now laid part of the blame on himself for the failure to bring about more complete reform in England and bemoans the entire English Reformation to that point. Having learned of Mary's intention to marry Philip of Spain Knox is concerned that England will become irrevocably Catholic, he accuses Mary of treason for planning to make a foreigner king and hopes that the English people will agree with his assessment and prevent the act. These letters show not only Knox's maturation during his time in England but how seriously he now felt about reform. In both letters Knox's ultimate concern is that God's law and will for reform is followed as he believes that failing to do so brings about dire consequences. To see this goal accomplished Knox takes a number of approaches and in future years is at times inconsistent in his methods. His goal or determination to see it accomplished does not change.

Ultimately, Knox has been frequently associated with the Puritans both because of their approach to worship, and also because they did not fit into the English religious culture they found themselves in. Knox did not understand this immediately, but near the end of his time in England he began to understand that his preferred approach to reform was not the predominate English way. While he accepted an uncomfortable compromise for a time, he eventually found this untenable and reacted strongly against it. He was

buoyed by the fact that he believed God's actions supported his view. Knox's views on the English Reformation and the debate to that point are well summarized in W. Stanford Reid's article, "Knox's Attitude to the English Reformation."<sup>1</sup> As Reid presents the different views on Knox's influence in England and his subsequent view of the reform that happens in that country it becomes clear that the "Black Rubric" and the events surrounding its addition to the 1552 *Book of Common Prayer* play a central role. As he notes for many years Lorimer's view, that Knox achieved a victory for non-conformity by having this inserted in the book, was highly influential. Lorimer and others believed that this event could be seen as Knox beginning to lay the ground work for English Puritanism.<sup>2</sup> While this shows Knox at odds with the leaders of reform in England it seems to give Knox more credit than he is due for his influence while in England and also portrays Knox as being satisfied with the work he did in England. Others have also suggested that there was little difference between Knox and the leaders of Edwardian English reform.<sup>3</sup> Both these groups seem to have failed to place enough value on the importance Knox attached to the practice of the Lord's Supper and by extension the direction and severity of reform. Therefore, if this episode is understood as a loss and disappointment for Knox, as outlined above, he can be seen as objecting to reform in England even while there and left unsatisfied with his own efforts. This context allows for his subsequent letters to be seen as the writings of someone dissatisfied with English reform and, by the time of *A Faithful Admonition*, a reformer dissatisfied with his own

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<sup>1</sup> W. Stanford Reid, "Knox's Attitude to the English Reformation," 1-32.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 2. Gordon Donaldson is especially note worthy for holding the view that Knox accepted and favored the English episcopal model.

efforts and becoming focused on the need to counteract this sluggish reform which can be demonstrated in his actions in Frankfurt.

Knox has also often been portrayed as a hard, uncompromising man. This is not an entirely fair caricature of him, as his pastoral letters and counseling examined here have shown in part. However, it is undeniable that he regularly took a black and white approach, especially on matters of religion, and would not be persuaded otherwise. From the perspective of today, this is usually seen as a negative character trait and many in Knox's time perceived it in a similar light. For Knox, this was not a problem, but a necessity if he was going to accomplish the calling he had from God. As he later said, "In religioun thair is na middis: either it is the religioun of God, and that in everie thing that is done it must have the assurance of his awn Word... of els it is the religious on the Divill, whilk is, when men will erect and set up to God sic religioun as pleaseth thame."<sup>4</sup> Knox was called and equipped to be a pastor, preacher and prophet in God's service to bring about the reform of his Church. These were roles which he grew into during his time in England and began to fully exercise as he became assured of his call and grew in confidence. It was also during this time, and shortly after, that he became assured of how he should exercise them in order to accomplish his goal of reform. Knox was uncompromising but he was so because he had learned that compromising God's Word would bring his judgment, as it had in England. In this sense, Knox and his actions and motives later in life must be understood through the lens of his time in England.

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<sup>4</sup> Knox, *Works* vol. IV, 232.

## Appendix – The Faith and Influence of Edward VI

Edwardian England was a unique time in the Reformation in England, not least because Edward VI never reached the age of majority, therefore, his personal influence on policy was limited. However, this does not mean that ‘King Josiah’ did not play a role in the evangelical reform during his reign or that he did not fully support it. From a very early age, Edward had received an excellent evangelical styled education and appeared to have been a bright and devout boy. Also, contrary to the common perception that he was sickly, he was active and enjoyed hunting.<sup>1</sup> At an early age, he had mastered English, French, Latin, and Greek. Besides his school work he wrote a great deal, keeping a chronicle of political and military affairs as well as detailed notes of the sermons he heard, which was many. Notable was a short treatise he wrote in French against the papacy. In this treatise, Edward argues against papal primacy in a number of ways. First, he argues that Peter was not primate of the church and secondly that there is no proof that Peter was ever in Rome. Furthermore, he adds that even earlier bishops of Rome, such as Gregory, wrote denouncing the idea of anyone bishop holding primacy over the others. He then concludes that the prophecies regarding the antichrist can be understood as applying to the Pope. He ends,

Since then the pope is that wicked one, very son of the devil, an antichrist, and an abominable tyrant, let us pray unto the Lord to preserve those still in the light who have seen it: and that he will show the sincere, pure and true light unto those who

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<sup>1</sup> MacCulloch, *The Boy King*, 21.

sit in darkness: that all the world may glorify God in this life, and he partakers of the eternal kingdom in the world to come.<sup>2</sup>

While clearly written under the direction of his tutors Diarmaid MacCulloch argues that the work appears to be original to the king in composition but also it seems in thought.<sup>3</sup>

While Edward did not have much involvement in the early years of his reign it seems that as he grew older he exercised more of an influence on the affairs carried out in his name. It certainly seems that the reform that was carried out during his reign was in keeping with his own desires. At times his zeal for the evangelical cause seemed to have outstripped his advisors. This can be seen in the manner in which he addressed his half-sister Mary, the future queen, regarding her rights to follow her Catholic faith. In particular, she wished to be able to receive the Eucharist in the Catholic manner, a privilege Charles V insisted she have. This question was raised in 1551 when Edward would have turned 13. It appears that around this time, and under the leadership of Northumberland, that he began to take a more active role in his government. Edward was unwilling to allow Mary to practice 'her religion'. This stance not only created an awkward familial relationship but also risked the intervention of Charles V. Edward's counselors were eager to avoid any trouble with Charles V and advocated for a temporary allowance for Mary to partake in the Catholic Mass. Edward was able to exercise considerable force in this incident and free thinking as he appears to have been unmoved by his counselors and in fact pressure mounted on his sister to conform. The matter was

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<sup>2</sup> Edward VI, "A Small Treatise against the Primacy of the Pope," in *Writings of Edward The Sixth* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1836), 47-48.

<sup>3</sup> MacCulloch, *The Boy King*, 27. MacCulloch notes that the original draft of the treatise has been marked up by another hand which is likely a tutor's corrections to it and that there is also a note confirming that the work in question was Edward VI's.

left somewhat undecided as a result and Mary had her rights censured but was still able to maintain some of her Catholic ceremonies under her brother's rule.<sup>4</sup> MacCulloch notes that by May of 1552 Edward appears to have been directly involved in financial matters and his involvement increased until he became comprised through illness which would tragically cut short his life.<sup>5</sup> Even in these last days, now a teen of 15, he seems to have taken an active role in the plans for his succession. Contrary to some, MacCulloch argues that Edward was central to the attempt to alter the succession so that Lady Jane Grey would inherit his throne.<sup>6</sup> In the end, the attempt was ill-conceived, poorly carried out and ultimately unsuccessful however it does show a degree of the power and potential the young king possessed as well as his determination to found an evangelical nation and church.

The young king represented hope not only for evangelicals in England but for the Protestant movement as a whole. A number of prominent reformers wrote to him including Calvin who on one occasion included his exposition of Psalm 87 which he felt would be edifying for the young king. Calvin writes, "It is therefore an inestimable privilege that God has made you, sire, a christian king, to the end that you may act as his vicegerent in maintaining the kingdom of Jesus Christ in England."<sup>7</sup> He continues exhorting Edward to uphold and administer the gospel and hopes that he will be able to be of more aid to him in the future. While Cranmer's great hopes of a Protestant council

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, 36-37.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, 39.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, 39-41.

<sup>7</sup> John Calvin, "Letter CCCXXXVIII-John Calvin to King Edward VI" in *Original Letters relative to The English Reformation* ed. Hastings Robinson (Cambridge: The University Press, 1847), 715.

in England never came to fruition there does seem to have been a sense of cautious optimism among Protestants about what it could mean to have an evangelical king leading one of Europe's great nations. If his early life and attitudes are any indication Edward would not have disappointed them, although what direction the English Reformation would have taken had he lived longer we will never know.

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